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## ABSTRACT

Designed to help principals in rural and small schools, this volume contains 29 articles under the three broad headings of new possibilities in everyday practice, applications of recent research, and initiatives to help schools and communities grow. The editors' introduction notes the challenges facing small school administrators, the problems shared by all schools regardless of size, and the general lack of attention to solutions that are workable for small, rural schools. A prologue for each of the three sections of the text provides an overview and highlights the contributions of individual authors. The first section, "The Principal and Practice," contains descriptions of daily, recurring situations such as the need for teacher recognition and discusses one or more successful efforts at working on a particular issue. Articles in the second section, "The Principal and Research," describe research efforts of interest to principals, research activities in which principals are actively engaged, and networking programs bringing a variety of individuals together to analyze and resolve problems. Articles in the third section, "The Principal and Vision," either bring current concerns to the future or describe a vision for small, rural schools. Specific topics include staff evaluation, parent involvement, and reform mandates for effective schools.  
(JHZ)

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# The Rural And Small School Principalship:

Practice, Research and Vision

Edward R. Ducharme  
and  
Douglas S. Fleming, Editors

NORTHEAST REGIONAL EXCHANGE, INC.

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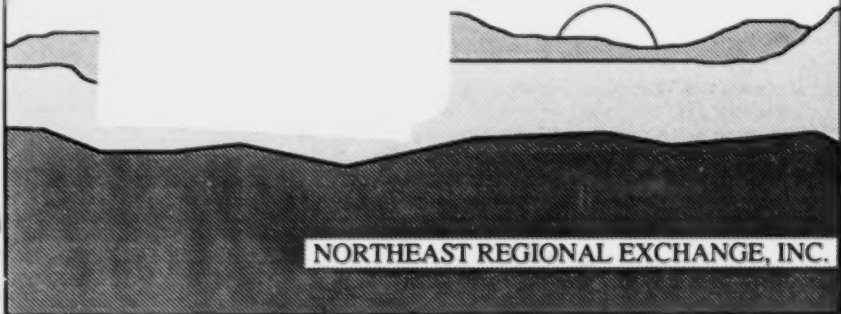


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NORTHEAST REGIONAL EXCHANGE, INC.

## THE NORTHEAST REGIONAL EXCHANGE

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## FOREWORD

The rural and small school principalship is a study of constraints: constraints in curriculum offerings and scheduling due to small enrollments; constraints on recruitment of persons with specialized skills due to modest budgets; constraints on time due to multiple demands and few practical ways to delegate tasks; and constraints on access to new approaches and ideas due to geography and isolation.

Given these conditions, it is remarkable that so many rural and small school leaders and their staffs are able to make do, with less, and are able to seize on their uniqueness, to go over, under, or around perceived limitations to providing exciting learning environments for students and teachers.

This book has been planned to help principals in rural and small schools (and those who aspire to be) to see new possibilities in everyday practice, in applications of recent research, and in the design of initiatives to help their schools and community grow. **The Rural and Small School Principalship** promises to be a useful resource in leadership development programs for school administrators, in graduate school programs, and less formal gatherings of school leaders. By illustrating the principal at work, by portraying the school principal as both user and participant in research-based programs, and by providing several sharp looks and broad stares at the potentials of living and learning in small schools, we hope we have contributed to the literature on this important aspect of education in America.

Development of **The Rural and Small School Principalship** was facilitated by the combined efforts of Editors Edward R. Ducharme and Douglas S. Fleming. Their talents, personal networks, and experience in observing and working in rural and small schools resulted in the smooth and timely delivery of this publication. We are grateful to them and the many rural and small school educators who contributed to this publication.

J. Lynn Griesemer, *Executive Director*  
Northeast Regional Exchange, Inc.

## Acknowledgments

Submitting articles to educational publications carries few guarantees. Writers commonly worry over their sense of audience, context, or voice. Was my article too academic? Too theoretical? Too simple? Too general?

As editors, we are grateful to all who submitted manuscripts. We assembled a quilt with both color and coverage, but had many more pieces to work with than we could fit.

Special thanks go to individuals who helped us to locate principals and others to describe their work in rural and small school settings. These persons include Dr. Mary Kluender of the University of Nebraska, Dr. Joe Richardson of the University of Georgia, Dr. Roland Barth of the Harvard Principals' Center, and Ms. Charlene Popham, Superintendent of Schools in Readfield, Maine.

No publication is produced without painstaking revisions, readjustments, and reviews. Gretchen Gillette of the Northeast Regional Exchange, Inc. and the staff of Patrobas, Inc. formed an effective typesetting/technical editing team.

Finally, we acknowledge the support of the Northeast Regional Exchange, Inc. and the National Institute of Education in making this publication possible. We laud their effort to promote access to recent research and effective practice and to disseminate both to broader audiences across the United States.

### The Editors

Edward R. Ducharme  
Douglas S. Fleming

December, 1985

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# Introduction

The editors of this book started from the convictions that administrators in small, rural schools are underserved; that there exists a variety of interesting and useful ideas and practices that would well serve these individuals; that a concentrated effort to solicit written descriptions of perceived effective practices would produce a series of useful essays; that there are common and recurring problems and solutions endemic to small, rural schools across the country.

The writings submitted more than fulfilled these convictions. Indeed, it appears that there is a well-spring of ideas and practices whose written description awaited only an invitation. The invitations, developed quickly and sent to practitioners around the country, produced a surprising outpouring of writing, given the business of people's lives and the very short turn-around time that the call for manuscripts stipulated. The editors faced a formidable task in selecting the best writings from an impressive set of submissions. We think they serve well our expectations.

School administrators can serve as the definitive example of overworked and underfocused individuals. In the current argot, they serve as leaders in "loosely-coupled" organizations. Often the organizations appear uncertain about direction; consequently, those who attempt to lead the organizations suffer from a lack of clear and workable role definitions.

Administrators in small, rural schools face particularly challenging jobs. Where job descriptions exist, they are frequently impossible to fulfill and, at the same time, sufficiently ambiguous to allow for a variety of actions by those who control their positions.

Small school administrators face the responsibility of the customary task of running a school; for example, staffing, scheduling, conducting of faculty meetings, drawing up of a budget, leading curriculum development. One of the chief differences between small school administrators and large school administrators may be that the latter can delegate some tasks while the former may often be responsible for not only seeing that they are done but for actually performing the tasks.

Principals in these schools are generally known to the entire community; many have come from the teaching staffs they now supervise. There is little in the way of anonymity in a small community. Administrator offices, if they exist, are often in an area adjacent to public passageways. Relationships are often on a first-name basis; informality is the norm. Yet the demands for effective performance are no less apparent than in larger, more formal organizations.

Meetings attended by principals of small schools are interesting for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the amount of idea-swapping and solution-sharing that goes on at the edges of the meetings, during coffee breaks, and in parking lots. The commonality of the smallness of their institutions combined with what appear to be feelings of having been omitted in the thinking of theorists, planners, and designers of school change and improvement may account, in part, for the amount of informal sharing that goes on.

Problems of large schools are present in small schools as well. For example, communications is a critical issue whether the principal has a staff of one hundred or a staff of ten. Many of the communications "solutions" written of in texts deal with or assume large populations. We were interested in determining what interesting strategies might have evolved in smaller units as they attempt to resolve issues.

The assumption often exists that small schools have "small" problems. The writings in this text reveal that small schools have problems quite similar to those encountered in larger schools; it is the scope and degree that are different, not the kind.

Regardless of size, however, no school has been immune to the "reform" issues of recent times. There is no lack of materials, articles, essays, and homilies to describe what various groups perceive to be the problems and dilemmas of America's schools. Indeed, the last two years have seen perhaps the largest outpourings of such documents in our nation's history. The various states have developed a series of positions, activities, and responses. Individual schools, in turn, have acted similarly. There is much activity at all levels of education, a great deal of it untargeted and seemingly random.

As is generally the case, administrators feel the impact of the latest demands and accusations. Demands for accountability, test score rises, curriculum development, staff development and supervision, better use of resources, clearer goals statements--these and a variety of other issues face school administrators. The quick-fix mentality of the society produces a perceived need for quick and ready solutions.

At the same time that reports of disaster are regularly issued, it is becoming increasingly apparent that there are well-run, productive, and successful schools in America. The Effective Schools Movement and the U.S. Department of Education's Secondary School Recognition Program are but two examples of organized efforts to recognize and reward good schools. Meetings and conferences, such as those sponsored by the National Institute of Education, have brought practitioners and programs together.

These efforts, however potent and effective they might be, are limited to participants. The "success stories" and the accompanying descriptions of rationale, practices, and programs are consequently shared by a necessarily small number.



This text is an attempt to broaden significantly the audience for those who can describe successes in specific context. The editors are well aware that, to a considerable degree, each school is different from any other one while at the same time each school is similar to every other one.

Staff development needs transcend school size. Staff development matters have complex implications in small schools. In a large school of forty to fifty faculty, one can, with the support and interest of the group, elicit topics or areas of inquiry that a staff development program might address. If only a third of the staff is interested, the program will appeal to ten or more individuals. A third of the staff in many small elementary schools would produce four or five individuals who might be interested in a given topic. Thus, adaptations of "solutions" for larger schools are needed for smaller schools.

Unaccompanied by local adaptation, informed analyses, and careful implementation, few ideas or practices translate well from place to place. Thus, we both enjoin readers to try many of the things suggested in this book while at the same time we caution readers about direct applications without thoughtful analysis and imaginative adaptation.

Readers will note that some of the writers come from schools that clearly are not small and rural. When asked what we meant by small, we concluded that a small school would be at least bigger than most hen coops but smaller than most barns for a two-hundred head herd of milkers. That definition did not help a great deal. "Rural" proved equally hard to define. Saying that rural in 1985 means that one sees more TV satellite dishes than swimming pools was not helpful; saying anyplace ten miles or more from a nationally known outlet for fast foods did not sort either.

Like all competent educators, we compromised. We concluded that we would aim for as many articles reflecting what, in our judgment, is small and rural written by writers either themselves from these environments or in collaboration with such writers. Secondly, we concluded we would accept other writings if their intent, focus, and direction suggest to us a strong application to small, rural schools.

The text is divided into three sections. The first, *The Principal and Practice*, contains vignettes describing daily, recurring situations such as the need for teacher recognition. Each article describes one or more successful efforts at working on a particular issue. The second section, *The Principal and Research*, contains articles which describe research efforts of interest to principals, research activities in which principals are engaged, and networking programs bringing a variety of individuals together to analyze and resolve problems. The third section, *The Principal and Vision*, is made up of articles which either bring current concerns to the future or describe a vision for small, rural schools. None of this is a blueprint; each is a provocative statement to help with the planning for the future. In our review of manuscripts, we

sought for a variety of viewpoints and a breadth of coverage, two elements necessary to reflect the richness and variety of small, rural schools.

Visitors to small, rural schools are sometimes struck by the frequent isolation and sometime independence displayed. Despite existing in a decade of instant globe-wide communications, these schools are often remote from conferences, networks, university services, state department efforts, and the other sources that both assist and befuddle administrators in urban and suburban schools. Occasionally, one sees, as a consequence of these conditions, a reluctance to appear needful, a resistance to external sources of alleged or real expertise, a firm decision to do things on one's own without external assistance or impact. The editors believe that the writings in this book will assist even those firm practitioners of American independence.

## Prologue

# The Principal and Practice

The first section of the text contains articles describing what principals and other administrators do or assist others to do that has incremental effects on the overall quality of life in their schools. Some of the suggestions may appear to be little more than common sense; reflection may reveal that one of the characteristics of common sense is its uncommonness.

Given the highly pragmatic nature of the articles in this section, one should not be surprised to note the few links to theory, literature, or research studies in the article. Yet, interestingly enough, most of the examples, suggestions, and practices mirror many of those in the school effectiveness and school improvement literature; e.g., highly visible leadership, pupil monitoring, parental and community involvement, healthy school environment, and effective communications. While firmly rooted in practice, these articles illuminate and explicate theory and research. Springing from practice, the suggestions and examples have a distinctly practitioner orientation.

Simple ideas are sometimes the key to intervening in complex situations. Leister, in "100% Effectiveness in Reaching Parents and Students," describes the simple act of reading and commenting upon student report cards. From this process, he gleans information about students and staff; in addition, he makes his presence felt in the lives of the young people in school. The comments he occasionally makes on the cards reveal his specific knowledge of individual students.

Nearly every school has a collection of books for readers to borrow; most schools have a room or area designated as the library. Whiten, in "A Principal's Perspective," shows how even an unstaffed library area can be a vital center for students and adults. Some of Whiten's ideas have implications beyond library and reading; for example, he involves the students in the selection of a new set of encyclopedias, a process that forces the salesman to talk with children and explain his materials to them. Whiten's piece is also an implicit argument for the value of reading and the necessity for effective models for children. He shows how a great deal can be done with very little.

In "Nothing Succeeds Like Success," Driscoll and Martz describe a mathematics program in which the teacher is the chief agent in developing the program. The success of the program is also directly related to a principal's willingness to let a teacher work assiduously on a program, provide

encouragement as successes develop, and give support along the way. This program illustrates how a principal can be critical to the success of a venture without being highly visible. Another noteworthy aspect of this particular program is the way in which the principal passed his enthusiasm on to his successor so that no break in development occurred. One also notes that the successor came with a background appropriate for the support of the program.

Jamieson, in "Coping with Familiarity with Staff in a Rural and Small School," looks at one of the aspects of small and rural schools; namely, the familiarity principals and staff share, and comments on some of its potentially negative outcomes. She counsels that principals avoid the snare of over familiarity which can be seen as favoritism; she urges that, even in small and rural schools, principals establish the customs of memo writing and minutes keeping.

Campbell, in "Staff Evaluation in a Small School," describes how Jamieson's familiarity can be used positively in developing an evaluation system in a small school. Campbell, conscious of the dilemmas of each other everyone so well, contends that the situation can lead to a strong and healthy environment for teachers; she is particularly keen on frank dialogue on strengths and weaknesses, specific feedback, and a climate for growth and inquiry.

Rural and small schools face the dilemmas of absenteeism, truancy, and dropping out common to many schools. Jones and Krelis, in "Reducing Chronic Absenteeism," describe a targeted program that is both concentrated and caring; at the same time, they contend that the costs are minimal. Their results suggest dramatically improved attendance and lowered drop out rate with an accompanying rise in test scores and student sense of self.

Gibson, in "The Small School Finds Support in Horace's Compromise," shows how a small school can effectively use national issues and reports to build support for its own programs. This approach enables a school to take the initiative in change rather than be driven primarily by external forces. It also shows how a principal can adroitly combine national imperatives with local mission.

"Murray School Highlights," by Bill Wells, shows how a school can effectively use commercial radio as a means of providing information, highlighting events and people, and keeping the school before the public. Having used radio in two different communities, Wells provides both a description of the process for use and a rationale for the practice.

Myriad tasks faced Hunt when she assumed her first principalship in 1980. Her remarks in "Lemons to Lemonade," describe how difficulties become opportunities in the hands of the right people. While she provides no magic recipe for changing "lemons into lemonade," she shows clearly that hard work, effective school and community relationships, and specific planning can go a long way in overcoming potential disaster.

"Helping a Staff Cope with Change" is clearly an article dealing with a school somewhat larger than the "small and rural" environment implicit in many of the pieces in this book. Merrill's "house" concept for a middle school is not a widely applicable model for many rural readers. Yet the editors decided to include this piece because of its several sane and clear observations about what administrators ought to do when their schools are undergoing change. From seeking external ideas to involving cafeteria workers through establishing a community information network, Merrill offers an impressive range of suggestions to those in charge of evolving organizations.

Flanagan, in "Personalizing Education: Teachers as Advisors," demonstrates how a small school can make very effective use of teachers as advisors thus providing a vital source of strength for pupil development. She describes how the many complexities and difficulties possible in role redefinition can be ameliorated through patience and planning. While Flanagan does not stress the point, her description makes clear how experienced faculty can acquire new skills and fill new roles, thus promoting their own development.

Jostworth and Taylor, in "Positive School Environment," address the potential inherent in old buildings and an openness to suggestions from, seemingly, any source. They point out how vital it is for students to feel that their school is, in fact, their school, a condition enhanced by acting on some of Jostworth and Taylor's suggestions. The two writers also include a wide-ranging list of activities, so wide that it would be difficult to imagine a school that could not profit from using some of them.

Wilkins' "Lives of a Rural Principal" demonstrates how there can be life in the many lives of a rural principal. In a running series of anecdotes, Wilkins delineates the universe of expectations, tasks, and challenges confronting a principal daily. His amusing and informative piece demonstrates that both the technical skills and knowledge gained in coursework and in unyielding humaneness and sense of the absurd are necessary for survival, growth and--yes--happiness in the role of rural principal. A good place to end.

# 100% Effectiveness in Reaching Parents and Students

by MR. ROBERT D. LEISTER, Teacher of Mathematics  
Whitcomb High School  
Bethel, Vermont

A direct message from you to parents that will be read every time! What's the catch? You actually write to each student on his or her report card. For a principal of a small school (300 would be about the maximum) this method of communication has given me more positive feedback and parent appreciation than any other thing that I have done, and I've tried almost everything, including spaghetti dinners.

Each marking period, there are six in my school, I go through the report cards to be sure that they are complete and to catch any obvious errors. As I do this, I can see how each student is doing. I find that by writing, "Good Job!" or "Looks much better" or "We need to get together," parents and students are aware that I am monitoring the cards. By writing a short note, I leave the footprint that I am watching.

The most valuable part of looking over the whole card is that, generally, most report cards are never judged in a total sense. Each teacher can send a message with a mark by note or some system of numbering footnotes. By reviewing the whole card and reacting to it gives parents the feeling that someone at school really cares about the whole student. The students like it, too. It is not at all unusual to have a student come up to me in the hall and say, "You'll be surprised with my card when you see it." One aspect that amazes me is the detail I can recall about a given student's card when I need to know. I may not know the actual numbers, but I can say, "Bill is honors in everything but English." This information is useful when talking with teachers, parents or the students themselves.

One spinoff that a principal gets from doing this is an idea about how the teachers mark. The comparison between teachers and the variance of a particular teacher from card to card is, if not enlightening, at least interesting. This difference or variance is something that a principal needs to be aware of,

especially when a teacher tends to hand out extreme marks with high frequency. I can suspect things are tough in Mr. Jones' life when his rate of failure runs 20%. By monitoring all marks, I have felt a degree of faculty respect that is one of the best feelings I get relative to the job. Teachers appreciate that I care about how students do in their classes.

One of the pleasant parts of the effort for me is being able to react to the typical "all A" or "all 95%" student. For them, Honor Roll is just business as usual. I'll write, "Do this once more and I'll frame it." Occasionally, this has motivated some students to earn a framed report card handed out at the same time other students get theirs from the home room teacher. This framed card says without words, "You are a special student and we do not take you for granted."

One additional advantage is the follow-up. On a card, you might write, "Do not lose U.S. History." On the next card you might say, "You've saved it--don't let up." The students sense that they are being noticed. In other words, this effort is an excellent defense against losing a student in the cracks between teachers or departments. When a student takes a major tumble, whether the cause is falling in love or problems at home, the discovery and an antidote can come more quickly. In terms of limiting a dangerous loss for the individual, this is effective insurance.

If the reader is motivated to try this technique but anticipates a great deal of effort, I offer several strategies to help make it work. First, don't allow any interruptions and do a whole class at a time--roughly 30 to 40 minutes. Secondly, (and a confession with it) split the job with the guidance counselor. If each person does half the cards one marking period and then reverses grades for each succeeding marking period, both principal and guidance counselor have an informed "grip" on how things are. It is easy to look at the comments from the preceding marking period and respond with an appropriate remark.

While the purpose of reviewing report cards is primarily educational, it is also the most effective public relations tool I have found. For the investment of time, it is hard to beat, but most importantly, it helps the students.

# A Principal's Perspective

by DR. DAVID WHITIN, Principal  
Wales Elementary School  
Wales, Massachusetts

As a new principal, I organized a project to bring the staff together in a positive, cooperative way. Our school library was the architectural center of the school, but it was not the academic center. The reference books and the general collection were quite outdated. I raised this problem with the staff. They, too, recognized the condition of the library and wanted to do something about it. So we began.

Since we had some money available to purchase books, I asked the staff and the children to submit suggestions for new acquisitions. In talking to children informally, I learned that we needed more books of mystery, sports, drawing and humor. The teachers made suggestions of their own. The first and second grade teachers wanted to see more Bill Peet books; the third grade teacher asked for books by Steven Kellogg; and the sixth grade teacher requested the **Chronicles of Narnia**. The suggestions were many and varied, and they reflected the different interests and backgrounds of our school population. I listed some of my favorite books as well, particularly Newberry and Caldecott Award winners. I included many popular read-aloud books and found the bibliography in Jim Trelease's **The Read Aloud Handbook** to be quite valuable.

When the books arrived I turned over the responsibility of managing the order to the children. They opened the boxes, took the inventory, glued in the library pockets, put labels on the spines of each book, and sifted through the enclosed library cards to find title and author cards. The children also displayed the books on some tables in the library, sorting them into books for younger readers and books for older ones. Since we had no librarian or aide, the children assumed the responsibility for this part of the project. In this way they gained some valuable insights into the organization and classification system of our library.

Many of the books were displayed on a table in the front hallway for parents to see as they came for teacher conferences in November. Afterwards they were returned to the library where they could be checked out for the first time. As the books began circulation, I noticed them in every corner of the building. Children were reading many during their silent reading time and



teachers were discovering new books to read aloud, including those by Betsy Byars, Roald Dahl and Bill Peet. Other children were becoming hooked on a series of books, such as the **Chronicles of Narnia** and the **Wizard of Oz**. These series books can be addictive and have proven to be a vital part of our library collection. During our monthly preschool meeting, one parent even found some books to borrow for her four-year old daughter. Everyone was finding something in the library!

In addition to literary works, our library also needed a new set of encyclopedias. I requested that a World Book representative come to our school. When he arrived, I instructed him to bring his speech to the children of the intermediate grades since they were the ones who would use the materials. He looked a bit stunned. He was used to trying to convince one adult, not 30 children. The children listened attentively and asked good questions.

As we waited for our new books to arrive, I noticed that many of the books in the old library collection were good selections but had drab, unappealing covers. Such classics as **The Biggest Bear**, **Make Way for Ducklings** and **Ferdinand** had not been checked out in over a year, due partly to their uninteresting appearance. I involved some sixth graders in resurrecting these forgotten books by creating new book jackets, complete with illustrations and a story summary. The final jacket was covered with cellophane to protect it. Many of these students selected books that had once been their favorites. They advertised these "new" editions by reading them aloud to the younger grades. Not only did they do an admirable job in showing off these refurbished classics but their enthusiasm for a good book was a powerful way to model the enjoyment of reading.

In the process of solving our library problem we were beginning to shape and define some significant reading goals. As the students read more, they were not only gaining important reading skills, but they were developing a healthier attitude toward books. Revitalizing the library helped to reinforce again the notion that reading is a valuable and rewarding activity. As a staff we were beginning to realize how crucial it is for schools to graduate students who not only can read but who want to read. Our library improvement project was helping us cultivate a real enjoyment of reading.

Thus, it was the library that helped bring our staff and students closer together. We all identified the problem and made recommendations on how to improve its resources. Children, too, became involved by ordering books, evaluating encyclopedias and advertising new books to younger classmates. It was because teachers and students solved the problem together that they felt more committed and more satisfied when they saw some successful results. It proved to be a learning experience for all of us, and drew us closer together as a school.

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# Nothing Succeeds Like Success

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and

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*"Results follow perceptions. The way to improve a program is to change people's perceptions first. Then good results will follow."*

*Former principal, Grant Park High School*

*"Shirley works very, very, hard for the program. American education is heavily subsidized by underpaid women like her."*

*Present principal, Grant Park High School*

Grant Park High School, Grant Park, Illinois, was one of the sites visited in 1983 during a two-year study of exemplary mathematics programs. The purpose of the study, funded by the National Institute of Education, was to identify factors associated with excellence in precollege mathematics programs. In a self-nomination process, schools across the country submitted evidence of their programs' exemplariness. This evidence had to consist of measurable student outcomes, such as test scores significantly higher than the national norms, or outstanding participation in critical mathematics courses by females or minorities. The ultimate aim of the study was to help mathematics educators by identifying factors in exemplary programs that appear strongly correlated with the excellence of their student outcomes.

Two important factors that emerged from the mathematics study concern the importance of leadership. It became evident that exemplary programs are characterized by the kind of leadership that results in a well-run, well-organized department that frees teachers from non-instructional distractions. Further, exemplary programs are characterized by leadership that makes it possible for

teachers to feel and act as professionals, and that stimulates questioning, sharing, and taking part in ongoing professional interactions. Grant Park's success corroborates these findings.

By standards set at many urban and suburban schools, Grant Park's high school mathematics program might not be considered exemplary at all. Relatively few courses are offered and, while test scores are good, they do not shine very brightly when taken out of context. Context was important in our study. Along with a search for excellence, we sought programs that far exceed expectations for success in their particular settings and with their particular students.

By this standard, Grant Park was a welcome addition to our study, an exemplar of an important yet fragile commodity in this country--successful mathematics programs at small rural high schools. These programs usually have meager financial resources, and they struggle. With the growing teacher shortages in mathematics, their struggle has become especially acute: often, the well-being and even survival of a program revolves around one person.

Grant Park has shown that one way out of mediocrity for such programs is a combination of enlightened leadership and dedicated teaching that, together, squeeze the most out of available resources. The leadership found a mechanism--team competitions--to convince the school community and even the Grant Park community that there was more potential for success in mathematics than they believed, and then the teaching took a bit of newfound success and worked it into an expected pattern. Now test scores and course enrollments are up, spurred upward by the general enthusiasm for mathematics competitions. The drive to overcome mediocrity in Grant Park's mathematics program is by no mean complete. The fragility that haunts much of rural education continues to hover over their established pattern of success.

Grant Park is a small Illinois town of 1,100 people, set in the middle of corn and soybean fields. No building in the town exceeds three stories except for the grain elevator and that, in classic fashion looms for miles from its perch next to the railroad tracks. The houses along the main street, all freshly painted white in celebration of the town's 150th anniversary, add to the town's special, simple appeal.

George Swanson, the high school principal, described Grant Park as filled with a "a strong Protestant ethic and Dutch blue-eyed conservative families." It is a stable community; 75 percent of the high school graduating class the year we visited were schooled in Grant Park since kindergarten. Most of the high school's 18 teachers are from the immediate area. Familiarity and roots are attractive features about the school, but they are about the only attractions that can offset the town's low teacher salaries.

Though Grant Park is small, its school district covers a 62.5 square mile area. The high school contains 190 students in grades 9 through 12, most of whom live on farms in the area. The demands of farm life, coupled with the

distances traveled to and from school, understandably cut into students' attachments to school. In addition, the common practice of passing farms from parents to children has traditionally cut into school ties even more, especially as those ties were linked to postsecondary education. But lately there has been a change in Grant Park. When Joe Wakely, Grant Park's former high school principal and superintendent (and now superintendent in a larger, neighboring town), took over the high school 10 years ago, only 4 of 45 graduating seniors were going to college. In 1982-83, 18 of 39 chose to continue their education beyond high school.

In a community like Grant Park, which has few college graduates besides its teachers, such a change is revolutionary. In part, as a November, 1984, series in The Wall Street Journal made clear, the change can be explained by the social fabric changes in farm communities in the past decade. Farming remains a viable life for fewer and fewer young people, and they are obliged to look to other careers. Even so, an hour's conversation with Joe Wakeley is enough to convince a visitor that social forces alone have not made the difference in Grant Park. His pursuit of change has been vigorous and intense, and the pursuit has touched mathematics more than any other subject.

The mathematics department has 1.5 teachers. The full-time person, Shirley Koelling, teaches general math, Algebra I, Algebra II, pre-calculus, and a double session of computer science (BASIC); the half-time teacher teaches business math, Algebra I, and geometry; a science instructor teaches a course in FORTRAN. Two aspects of the mathematics program are important. First, nearly 80 percent of the students were enrolled in at least one mathematics course. Second, in state and local competitions, the school has fared well, despite the fact that, as Principal Swanson told us, "In every math, computer, or biology tournament we enter, we're the smallest school." Like the increase in college-bound students, these two changes have been relatively recent.

Mathematics competitions have become Grant Park's lever to success primarily because of Wakeley's vision and zeal, Swanson's continued support after he took over as principal, and Koelling's hard work, but another factor has also helped. The state mathematics teachers' association in Illinois is one of the most active in the country in organizing competitions on all levels--local, regional, and state. The association does a remarkable job of publicizing and generating enthusiasm for them.

"They get the maximum out of what has to be a meager budget," Wakeley said. "But it works. People are generally aware of the competitions. Around this area, if you win math competitions, they think you have an excellent program."

Wakeley mused about the value of perceptions as he sat with us in his office in a nearby town, where he had recently become superintendent of schools. The town is larger than Grant Park, with a more diverse population,

wider range of interests, and more complex problems, yet he is already priming his high school's mathematics team to win. With a mixture of pride and disappointment, born of his old and new ties, he reported that the team had just placed second to Grant Park in a county competition.

He is confident, however, that history will repeat itself, that once again his intuition is correct: if visible improvements occur (in this case, a steady climb in competitions), then he, as leader, can change the school and community perceptions of the mathematics program. At that point, he will be able to spring from their changed perceptions into demands for more improvements. "I am more sure than ever," he told us. "Results follow perceptions."

On the scale that Wakeley experiments with his "results follow perceptions" notion, only small towns would seem to qualify as laboratories. Larger settings carry too many variables, too many people to allow his kind of frontal assault. But in our study, we did see the phenomenon at larger schools, expressed, however, in more subtle forms: mathematics staffs that make themselves more visible in their schools and communities than other departments by their extraordinary availability to students, by their exceptional efforts to work with feeder schools to unify programs, as well as by their well-publicized successes in competitions. In various settings, principals and superintendents told us such things as: "They're our stalwarts." ..... "They're my hardest working department." ..... "I try to give them what they ask for. They earn every bit of it." For their parts, the exemplary mathematics programs do ask more, and also demand more of themselves. It is not their nature to rest on laurels, and it is generally not in the nature of their leaders to let them rest on laurels.

The program at Grant Park lacked any lustre until eight years ago, when Wakeley had an idea and took initiative on it. His idea was as simple as it was forceful: first, he would guide the program to some gains; then he would turn the community's favorable impressions of the gains into fodder for further gains. The particular route he chose was through mathematics competition, because it was relatively inexpensive and lent itself to visibility quite readily.

At the beginning, he worked with a teacher at a local junior college to locate as many collections of mathematics contest problems as they could. He then engaged Shirley Koelling, the full-time mathematics teacher then relatively new in the school and in teaching, to develop a math team by using the contest problems in her courses. They expected a modest beginning to their contest results. But Wakeley told Ms. Koelling to aim to move up one place per year, on the average, in local and state competitions. When this began to happen, he went to the school board, improved results in hand, and persuaded them to raise the mathematics requirement at Grant Park High School to two years. In the meantime, he acted "like an athletic coach." He and Koelling identified 10 or 15 talented students in each grade of the high

school and began to groom them for the team, even in some cases asking athletic coaches to release students early for mathematics competitions.

In 1983-84, 33 of the 190 students were involved in mathematics competitions. In previous years, the number has been as large as 50. Enthusiasm for the competitions is so keen that students who aren't even enrolled in a math course come to Ms. Koelling to ask if they can be on the team. Swanson, the new principal and a former engineer and mathematics teacher, has been bitten by the contest bug and so continues to support the school's involvement in mathematics competitions. (As we arrived the first day of our visit, he was in the hallway posting the results of the most recent contest, in which Grant Park nosed out Wakeley's team for first place.)

The middle school now has its own math team. Through its carefully designed set of objectives for its mathematics curriculum (an unofficial mastery learning program) and through its sharing of a teacher on a half-time basis with the high school, the middle school has established some continuity with the high school program.

The town is well aware of the math team. When Shirley Koelling wanted to send an especially talented student to a competition in the East last year, she garnered some financial support from the Lioness Club in Grant Park, additional support from a town merchant, and the rest from school funds.

Another anecdote caps the story of the math team in this small community. The district's new superintendent told us how, on the evening of the most recent competition, he was roused from supper by automobile horn-bling and the ringing of his doorbell. "I really didn't know what was going on. When I opened the front door, there were Shirley and the team waving and flashing their first-place ribbon."

Not surprisingly, competitions are on Shirley Koelling's mind as she manages the Grant Park mathematics curriculum and implements it from day to day. They are on her mind as she begins teaching Algebra I each September: "I look for candidates in that group and I start recruiting." They are also on her mind as she makes herself available to students "before school, after school, during lunch, during breaks, and during my planning periods."

During these times, when she is not providing remedial and general help, she is working with her team members. Occasionally--as, for example, during our visit--she will have team members give presentations during class on their contest work. Contest activities are not restricted to the math team. Approximately 80 students a year (more than a third of the school) take the American High School Mathematics Examination (AHSME) of the Mathematics Association of America. A small group are involved in the contests in mathematics and science called Test of Engineering Aptitude in Math and Science (TEAMS). Last year Grant Park won their district and regional TEAMS competitions, and then placed fourth at the state level. Typically, they were the smallest school represented at the state level.



After the careful planning of Joe Wakeley and with his and George Swanson's firm support and encouragement, Shirley Koelling's dedication and hard work constitute the second major factor behind the progress of the mathematics program. Koelling seemed slightly envious that other math team coaches in Illinois whom she knows are able to use after-school time to prepare their students for competitions. The majority of her students are dispersed at the end to the school day across the wide expanse of the school district, many to farm chores that cannot wait.

During her nine years at Grant Park, Koelling has been the only full-time mathematics teacher and, although she lunches once a week with the part-time teacher so that they might coordinate their algebra teaching, she really is a department unto herself. In so many of the programs we visited, continued success appears to be tied to the collegiality of staff and the strength they draw from each other. In that light, the professional loneliness seems all the more poignant, and her sustained enthusiasm and commitment all the more laudatory.

Her dedication, and the dedication of many of her rural teacher colleagues, has a special quality to it because of the relatively limited opportunities for young people growing up in an isolated community the size of Grant Park. There is a strong commitment of the part of these teachers to expose their students to as much as possible of what is new and different and to push them. "When freshmen come into our school they want to be a part of that winning team. I have students who are not taking math in their senior year ask if they could still go to math contests. I try to encourage all of them."

Money is an issue remarkably removed from the issue of teacher dedication in Grant Park (and, it is reasonable to assume, in communities like it). It is a sad corollary to the perpetual dearth of money for education. Generally in this school and community, there is a sense of pride in making it on very little. In Chicago, 50 miles away, a newspaper article appeared on the Grant Park schools under the headline, "Excellence for Peanuts."

In any case, money has little bearing on Shirley Koelling's dedication to the mathematics program. When we asked whether the master's degree she hopes to earn would increase her salary significantly, she looked surprised, even a bit annoyed by the question: "I don't know. That's not why I'd get it. I don't care what they pay me. I'd get it to help me teach better."

Joe Wakely told us, from his new vantage point as another district's superintendent, "Grant Park High School has done more with what they have than any other school in the state." A biased and subjective assessment, no doubt, but it does reflect the truth about the school's valiant and fragile efforts in mathematics.

In studying exemplary programs, we travelled from inner city schools to suburban schools to rural schools. Each type has its own set of special challenges, and each has designed its own set of responses. In Grant Park's



case, the challenges were a low budget and a traditional set of values that kept educational success on a rather low plane. Their response, through forceful and imaginative leadership and dedicated teaching, was to use a steady improvement in mathematics competitions as both a motivator for students and citizens, and their standard for setting the tone of the entire mathematics program. They stand as convincing proof that nothing succeeds like success.

# **Principal: Coping with Familiarity with Staff in a Rural and Small School**

by MS. E. JANET JAMIESON, Principal  
Main Street Middle School  
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Principals of rural and small schools can view familiarity with staff as both advantageous and disadvantageous. They know their staff members well, and the staff knows them. Often, principals are socially involved with staff. They may be "pals." Those members they choose not to socialize with are usually keenly aware of relationships and activities both within school and without. All staff tend to be perceptive to principal likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. The problem that arises is how the principals can be efficient school managers and educational leaders and cope effectively with familiarity. This article addresses some areas in which familiarity can be difficult and suggests ways of dealing with the problem.

The first area involves the choice of confidants. Each of us enjoys confiding with those persons we like and trust. For the rural and small school principals, it becomes very easy to choose confidants from the staff. In dealing with school issues, such a choice can quickly divide the staff into the "insiders" and the "outsiders." It can also narrow the scope of ideas and color the decision making process, as well as led to miscommunications. Those with whom the principals have confided may assume that they have been listened to and what was said in the conversation will happen when in fact, the principals decide to do something different. The "insiders" feel betrayed. The "outsiders" vie for power against the principal from the betrayed.

Confiding about personal problems to chosen staff puts principals in a very vulnerable position. Staff members used as confidants see the principals in a very different light. This can negatively impact the principals' role in dealing with the confidants. Confidences can be broken and personal information can be quickly fed to the rest of the staff.

As difficult as it is, the principals must not confide with individual staff members. They must choose confidants carefully from persons not under their leadership. When approached on a given topic, they must diplomatically

indicate that if there is a problem it should be put on the agenda of a staff meeting for all to discuss. Brainstorming, discussion of managerial problems, and educational issues, are best discussed with all staff not the chosen few. Personal problems are better left to unrelated school persons.

Familiarity can also present problems in the area of equal communications with staff. The principals may in casual social conversation with staff members discuss an impending decision and neglect to inform others promptly. The word gets out about what is coming and people feel left out. Principals are accused of not communicating well with their staffs.

This can easily be solved by carefully prefacing remarks and issuing a memo. Principals in rural and small schools need to be somewhat "paper" conscious. Like it or not, if the principals establish a rule that all decisions will be in writing to all staff members, most problems can be averted. It is a good practice to establish a written memo system, as well as written faculty meeting agendas with subsequent minutes. It is very important to develop a communications network that allows for all staff to be equally informed in a timely fashion.

Another area of concern in which familiarity can present problems to principals is that of fairness. Principals may be perceived as having favorites on the staff, both by those with whom they socialize and those with whom they do not. To be effective, the principals must not show favorites. Every attempt must be made to be fair and consistent with all staff. Decisions must be considered with regard to the total staff, not just some. If something is done for one staff member, equal consideration needs to be given to all.

Fairness is very much an issue in teacher evaluation. Rural and small school principals are wise to establish consistent methods of supervision with clearly defined criteria and process steps. They must follow procedures carefully.

Yet another area in which familiarity can hamper the rural and small school principals' role is involvement in contract negotiations. Comments made across the table can be devastating, especially when all must face one another the next day and keep an objective status. But, that is what must be done. The principals must be objective and regard the context in which the comments were made. They cannot take them personally. If comments are directed to school problems, they should weigh the comment. If appropriate, they should analyze the problem, derive potential solutions, and think through the implications of their proposals. Once this is done, they should seek faculty input by putting the concern on the agenda of a staff meeting. They should never discuss their concern about the comment with a staff member. If staff members approach them about the problem, they should remain objective, again guarded, and indicate that they are studying the problem. They should never make derogatory statements about the negotiation

proceedings or offer personal comments about them to any staff members. Objectivity is the key.

The last area of concern discussed here is the conflict that rural and small school principals have with the role of leader. Again, familiarity is the problem. It is sometimes difficult to inspire and motivate those who know one will. It is especially difficult to maintain a "vision". The principals of rural and small schools may get so involved with the individuals for whom they are responsible, that they lose sight of the goal, the direction, that the leadership position demands. They are confronted with such diverse demands that it becomes easier to acquiesce and compromise position. To avoid doing such, it is important that the principals define the "vision" and articulate it to the staff frequently. Constant reminders to self and staff will keep principals in touch with the defined purposes. A positive approach to the "vision" can be incorporated in communications with staff. For example, if a principal has the goal of the school being a "good place" as defined by William Glasser, the principal can constantly use the expression. Written and oral communications with the staff can emphasize the points the principal wants to communicate as the "vision."

Familiarity can be an advantage to the rural and small school principals. They must, however, continually remind themselves to choose their confidants wisely, provide equal communications, be fair and objective, maintain a delicate balance between real and staff perceived issues, and define the "vision" for the school. With those factors in mind, the rural and small school principals should be able to enjoy an excellent rapport with their staff.

# Teacher Recognition Programs

by MR. WALLACE D. CAMPBELL, Principal  
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Maintaining staff morale is a problem in a rural and small school or a large metropolitan district. If teachers are to have "good feelings" about teaching, the principal must make a conscientious effort to recognize teacher accomplishments. Examples of the types of teacher recognition used at Ankeney Junior High School in Beaver Creek, Ohio, are described in this article.

**The Golden Apple Award** was initiated to encourage teachers to recognize the accomplishments of other teachers. At a monthly staff meeting, the recipient of the previous month's Golden Apple Award publicly transfers the Golden Apple to another teacher while giving the reason for the choice. The Golden Apple is a gold colored, engraved metal bell which the teacher keeps for one month. A picture is taken of the teacher during the ceremony and a news release is sent to the local paper. Paula Walters was a recent recipient recognized for her work with the Taiwanese students in the school. She gave up part of her lunch period, invited guest speakers on Taiwanese culture, arranged for student tutors, and took special workshops in English as a Second Language (ESL) in order to help the students learn the language and succeed in American classes. A copy of the published news article was posted on the news board in the office in order to give exposure to the public, students, and staff.

News releases are important to teachers not only when they are recognized but when their students are recognized. If a student wins an art contest, the name of the teacher should be in the story. If a student does well at a speech contest or if the yearbook or student newspaper wins an award, advisors should be mentioned. Students do well, in part, because of the teachers who are teaching them.

Our school system gives an annual **Teacher of the Year Award**. Teachers can be nominated for this award by students, parents, staff, community members, and the principal. There are nine school buildings in this district with over four hundred on the teaching staff. Therefore, it is quite

an honor to be selected. There is always a nominee from the principal and a nominee from the assistant principal. A copy of the completed nomination form is given to teachers whether or not they win the award. Teachers feel good about being nominated by the principal.

The principal must search for other valid teacher recognition programs. There are many state and national teacher recognition awards. This past year nominations were made for: The Dayton Newspapers Teacher of the Year Award, Humane Teacher of the Year Award, Science Teacher of the Year Award, Math Teacher of the Year Award, and departmental awards for math and science. It takes time to complete these nomination forms, but it is worth it in terms of staff morale just to know of the nomination. When one of the staff members wins, morale skyrockets.

AJH was selected as an exemplary junior high school in the nation for 1983-84 as part of the Department of Education Secondary School Recognition Program. At the time AJH staff were in Washington receiving the award, President Reagan announced the Teacher in Space Program. Teachers were encouraged to apply for this program. In fact, one teacher completed all the paper work before the deadline. It is important for principals to encourage staff to apply for recognition programs. It boosts morale just knowing that the principal thinks that they are good enough to be considered.

Teachers merit the same consideration given to students when they have made a significant contribution. It should be announced to the entire school during daily announcements, mentioned in the Parent Newsletter, cited in a news release for the local paper, and the published article should be posted on the office news board.

At AJH we use "Positive Strokes" notes. These are two-part papers on which the principal sends a note to the teacher letting him/her know that the contribution has been noticed and appreciated. The second copy of the note is added to the teacher's personnel file for consideration when writing the final evaluation at the end of the year. Over the course of a year, it is difficult to remember all the good things that a teacher has done without some kind of written reminder. The Positive Strokes notes accomplish two things: they give the teacher immediate recognition and they provide a written reminder for the principal at the end of the year for writing the final evaluation. These notes are also helpful when nominating a teacher for an award.

Our county newspaper does a regular article called "School Scoops." It describes what is happening in the six school systems in the district. Most of these districts have several individual school buildings making it impossible for a reporter to cover all the schools. It is necessary for the principal to take the initiative in sending the information concerning staff accomplishments to the paper. County-wide exposure is important to staff members who operate within a county school system. It is better to send information which may or may not be used than to be ignored by the media.

Another excellent media source is the television station. TV newscasters like to highlight good things in education. When the principal makes arrangements for the TV crew to cover a class activity planned by a teacher, tremendous strides are made in morale both for the teacher and the school. The principal must be aggressive and assertive in working with the media.

It is important to share with teachers good things which are shared with the principal. If a parent writes a note praising the efforts of a particular teacher, the teacher should get a copy of that note. If a student says something positive about a teacher, it should be shared with the teacher either personally or with a Positive Strokes note. This takes extra effort on the part of the principal, but the dividend for this effort is increased teacher morale.

By way of a summary, the following checklist has been developed for the principal to use in developing a teacher recognition program.

- ☐ 1. Develop building level recognition such as the Golden Apple Award.
- ☐ 2. Mention the teacher in student news releases.
- ☐ 3. Participate in school district teacher recognition programs such as Teacher of the Year.
- ☐ 4. Participate in regional, state, and national teacher recognition programs.
- ☐ 5. Encourage teachers to apply for recognition programs.
- ☐ 6. Announce teacher accomplishments over the intercom.
- ☐ 7. Mention teacher accomplishments in the Parent Newsletter.
- ☐ 8. Send news releases regarding teacher accomplishments to local newspapers.
- ☐ 9. Post published articles about teacher accomplishments on an office news board.
- ☐ 10. Send Positive Strokes notes to staff members.
- ☐ 11. Reflect the positive accomplishments of the teacher in the final evaluation.
- ☐ 12. Arrange for television coverage for class activities.
- ☐ 13. Share positive notes or comments from parents with teachers.
- ☐ 14. Share positive comments from students with the teachers.
- ☐ 15. Evaluate the recognition program at least annually for additions and improvements.

One of the greatest fringe benefits for teachers is a well planned and utilized teacher recognition program. It is up to the principal to plan this program in order to maximize teacher morale.

# Staff Evaluation in a Small School

by DR. ESTHER L. CAMPBELL, Principal  
The Block Island School  
Block Island, Rhode Island

*"The class just doesn't seem motivated. They're the only group I have that seems to be getting nowhere."*

*"I've moved his seat to three different locations and I still can't seem to keep his attention. He's incorrigible!"*

*"I've taught this vocabulary lesson twice and they still don't seem to get it. I don't know whether my approach is wrong or the lesson is too difficult."*

These are typical concerns that teachers express during pre-observation conferences. Having a small staff--17 teachers and a Chapter I aide--in the only school in the district allows me the luxury of frequent informal meetings with each teacher in the system. These informal meetings are but one of the many advantages of a small district when evaluating staff.

The climate of the school is relaxed and friendly, providing many opportunities for interaction both in and out of the classrooms. These frequent encounters help keep communication open and leave little time for differences of opinion or personal dissatisfaction to smolder and become irrelevant issues. In this climate, teachers are neither intimidated nor threatened when I drop into a classroom unexpectedly nor when I schedule a more formal observation visit. Since my contact with students is also continuous, they either take little notice of my presence in the classroom or, with no inhibitions, include me in their discussions. The entire school K-12 functions as a unit with one single major goal. Yet, within this small unit, there are the same assessable components as in larger systems. The difference is that the closeness of the staff makes all interactions more personal and meaningful. Therefore, evaluations may possibly be more perceptive (and, if one is not cautious, perhaps too subjective).

Smaller systems can also afford to be more tolerant of diverse temperaments. With so few staff, when a teacher is disturbed or piqued there is no clique for escape. Everyone is in the same small boat, and the concerns



of one member are respected if not shared by all. Even I am not the remote impersonal authority figure; I am at varying times the mediator, the spokesman, or the sounding board. In this familial setting, disciplinary suggestions are accepted more graciously and recommendations for improvement are often discussed over coffee. Teachers are given an opportunity to counter my views and talk until we are both comfortable with the same outcome, a much more satisfactory method than the impersonal memos that are often necessary in a larger district. Smallness also contributes to a level of cohesiveness that defies outside interference by chronic community critics. Cooperative action from within works to correct perceived deficiencies.

Small staff size sometimes makes it possible to provide more compensatory benefits than is possible for larger systems. When teachers' efforts have earned recognition for which district funds are not available, we have been able to provide other relief:

- Excessive committee work has been allocated to in-service days.
- Grant awards provide for teacher visits to other systems and for workshops to be conducted by higher education consultants.
- Conference days are encouraged.
- Teachers are linked with experts who come and spend time in the classroom teaching and/or consulting.
- Field trips are encouraged; with small class size, these are pleasurable.
- Extra-curricular activities are recognized by system credits.
- Financial assistance may be provided for continuing graduate studies.

Smallness does create some problems, however. The elements for evaluation take on a different perspective in a school with fewer staff and fewer students. The whole area of the teacher's responsibility for "Student Attitudes and Behaviors," which assesses the degree to which the teacher "...assists students...recognizes the value of student's ideas...provides extra help as needed...", differs from that of a teacher of a class of 25-30. With class sizes from four to twelve in the secondary grades, expectations here are greater and teachers' responses to them are weighed heavily.

In a small community, daily class schedules are often disrupted by school events. An athletic meet involves pupils from five grades, and some small classes are left with one or two students. Teachers respond differently to having reduced classes and their creativity in dealing with the remaining members is an important factor in their evaluation. The situation offers an excellent opportunity to give extra help or enrichment for the remaining one or two.

When the staff is few--one teacher per subject area in the secondary grades--the "department head" responsibilities are added to that of a regular classroom teacher's. In-house surveys, state department reports, federal statistics, curriculum reviews, subject-related budgeting and purchasing all depend upon one teacher's commitment to the position. Without that commitment, my office duties are magnified. Therefore, the summary evaluation for each teacher includes characteristics beyond those observed in the classroom.

For elementary teachers with two grades each, the "Planning" area of the evaluation process takes priority, followed closely by "Classroom Environment and Management." These are important for all classrooms, large or small, but when there are two sets of curriculum objectives to prepare and half of the children are engaged in non-instructional activities for at least forty percent of the day, preparing meaningful plans for maintaining a conducive learning environment becomes especially challenging.

A further drawback of small systems when evaluating staff is the lack of opportunity for peer evaluations and review. Although our staff is compatible, it would be imprudent to have a teacher's colleagues observe a lesson because:

- the intimacy of the staff would preclude honest criticism
- teachers would be pulled from other area classes
- their competence in other subject areas would be minimized

For some of the same reasons, my evaluations of professional competence are often very subjective. My expertise in mathematics and science has diminished over the years, and it is presumptuous of me to judge the appropriateness of the degree of difficulty of an algebraic equation for a specific 9th grade class. Further, since there is but one secondary math teacher, I have no point of comparison to judge the relevancy of specific lessons or objectives. My evaluations for "Knowledge of Instructional Skills" must be made indirectly through third person conferences with parents, with students, with guidance counselors--and by periodic review of student progress. But review of student progress can be hazardous when class size is only five pupils; judgment thus made must be undertaken very cautiously, especially, for example, if a new teacher's Socratic philosophy is so completely antithetical to that of a predecessor who may have preferred an informal participatory classroom. Children and parents both decry sudden change, and assessments from that source are biased by personal preferences. In a comparable situation, the subject matter was not my forte, and my appraisal of professional skill and characteristics which I had observed weighed more heavily than that of the teacher's knowledge of subject matter which I'd gained from other sources. Teachers--new and experienced--need nurturing and support

until trust and faith in the system are firmly established. There is no "department" in which they can find solace or shelter if they feel betrayed.

Pre-observation conferences help build this trust. Teachers are encouraged to consider observations as one way to get objective feedback on what is happening in their classroom. They readily discuss areas in which they feel they need to improve. School-related and personal concerns are talked about and they feel comfortable in accepting classroom observations as only one factor in the total evaluation process, a process designed to help them identify and meet their goals.

The evaluation process, a modified clinical supervision approach, is relatively new to this system. Now in its third year, the rationale of the program has become more personal and specific. Although it is a "management by objectives" process, the climate and continual interaction of this small school make the use of bureaucratic directives and formal memos untenable. The management components to promote growth and development are in place, the quality of instruction is improving, and teachers are conscientious, cooperative, and unconstrained. Each now has developed goals for the year, targeting activities to attain them with a timetable for completion.

At my initial meeting with the staff as the new administrator, I reviewed my objectives for the system and then presented each member with three forms: Suggested Format to Develop Individual Job Description, Teacher Job Descriptions Resource List, and Diagnostic Checklist. Each form follows the same outline. The outline guides teachers in defining their individual responsibilities relative to Instructional Skills, Student Attitudes and Performance, Personal Qualities, Professional Growth and Development, and Relationships (with parents, community, teachers, administrators, and students).

Prior to the initial classroom visit of the year, each teacher meets with me to set a visitation date and to discuss a purpose for the visit. Later, we will target the week of the visit only, a contract requirement. During this pre-observation conference most teachers are very candid and often request that I focus my attention on a specific facet of the lesson. We discuss their expectations and frustrations, if any.

The classroom visit is diagnostic and the report, although anecdotal, follows the same outline as the resource list from which the teachers developed their own job descriptions and goals. Therefore, if the teacher targets one area of Instructional Skills as a potential growth area, the evaluation of the lesson viewed provides feedback on progress in reaching that specific goal with less emphasis on other areas. The Observation Report offers recommendations, and in summarizing comments, I indicate other observations I have made in less formal day-to-day activities which I perceive as either areas for growth or

reasons for commendation. These are all discussed in the post-observation conference with both of us signing the report.

Each formal class room visitation has a pre- and post-conference. At the end of the year, each teacher receives a Diagnostic Checklist on which I summarize my observation comments by use of a Likert-type scale, High (1) to Low (6). The teacher receives a blank checklist for self-analysis. These are used by the teacher to prepare the Target Development Form which provides the basis for establishing educational goals for the following year.

The combination of conferences and written narrative feedback keeps the lines of communication open. The pre-conference sets the stage and the post-conference provides an opportunity for rebuttal if there has been a misinterpretation or difference of opinion. It also enables me to give verbal commendations and praise where it is appropriate. Only the anecdotal observation report is filed in the personnel file after I sign it and the teacher acknowledges or accepts it.

Small community expectations often differ from those of larger systems. When considering an evaluation process or instrument, I considered not only the need of the staff for leadership and instruction, but also the intensity and interest with which the community was waiting to evaluate my own standards and goals. As the new administrator, I needed to understand the teachers' needs as perceived subjectively by them. This I was able to do through their self-identified Targets. I also needed to identify their needs as perceived more objectively by me. The conferences and observations facilitated this by supplementing my daily observations and interactions.

As I become more familiar with each teacher and with each of their teaching and teacher behaviors, evaluations may become more formal. Whichever process is used in future years, I am convinced that the fraternity of the small school staff promotes a climate that is open to continued growth and development.

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# Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

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*Chronic absenteeism is a precursor to dropping out. Prevention activities that are successful are multifaceted and are targeted to elementary as well as secondary students. A prevention program that included an interdisciplinary, school-system wide approach produced a reduction in the dropout rate from 28.73% to under 11%, and improved average daily attendance to approximately 96%. Direct, personal, immediate, and caring communication with parents and students emerged as the most effective technique to reduce chronic absenteeism and dropping out.*

## Introduction

Chronic absenteeism is a plague common to all high schools, but has reached epidemic proportions in many rural schools. Dropout researchers have developed a data-based core of knowledge that demonstrates that chronic absenteeism is a precursor to the act of dropping out (Jones, 1975; Jones, Cormier, and Wagaman, 1974; Loken, 1973).

Many strategies have been employed to combat both absenteeism and dropping out. Ohio County Schools in West Virginia identified the elimination of absenteeism as a system-wide goal and employed a combination of proven techniques. Lessons learned from their efforts have many implications for schools which dare to mount a similar challenge to passivity.

## Problem

Ohio County Schools were experiencing the same type of school dropout and school alienations syndrome that most rural schools face today. Review of

the literature (Jones, 1975; Jones, Cormier, and Wagaman, 1974; Loken, 1973) produced indicators that permitted detailed analyses of the factors that influenced the local pattern of alienation and dropping out. From that data base, a profile of the local dropout evolved.

That profile revealed that 61% of the dropouts displayed either truant or irregular attendance patterns prior to leaving school. The dropout was predominantly from the bottom quartile of the class academically, in the bottom quartile in reading, a non-participant in extracurricular activities, in the lower socioeconomic status, and had parents who were indifferent to schooling or who actively encouraged the act of quitting.

### Method

To reduce the dropout rate and to improve average daily attendance a multifaceted, sequential plan of intervention was devised. First, the number of departing 16-year-olds had to be lowered. Second, those convinced of the importance of returning to school needed supportive services. Third, a preventive treatment was needed to improve average daily attendance and to intervene in the interactive variables that created a dropout-prone syndrome for close to 30% of the students. Finally, a new attendance policy was adopted for the high school that made students responsible for their attendance behavior.

### Holding the Dropout

The high school focused on techniques for holding the student displaying symptoms of dropping out. A counselor trained in home-school communication techniques with a background in drug and alcohol counseling was designated as the dropout specialist.

This counselor accepted referrals from staff and screened newly entering sophomores for indications of dropout proneness. Exit interviews were held with each student who dropped out. These interviews were conducted in the home of the student in the presence of the parent with the express purpose of identifying the immediate causes of disaffection and attempting to dissuade the student from leaving by modifying the school environment. Rapport and support systems for school persistence were created for the student who typically did not assertively decide to dropout, but who just quit coming to school.

### **Rentry Program**

For those who decided to reenroll, a dropout reentry program was created. That program included a sequence of intense individual and group counseling experiences in the relationship between freedom and responsibility, test taking and study skills, assertive versus aggressive behavior, frustration tolerance and decision making skills. Simultaneously, contracts for academic and personal goals were made, while an educational program was tailored to the career and academic needs of the returning learner.

### **Project Care Call**

The final component of the intervention was to create a preventive, kindergarten through twelfth grade, awareness of the pernicious effects of chronic absenteeism on academic achievement, self-image, and maturation. Rather than preaching the evils of dropping out, the staff developed an innovative commitment to provide students and parents a vehicle for problem resolution. It took the form of "Project Care Call."

A care call was made by either counselors, nurses, administrators, or teachers to every student who was absent each day. The care call cadre was trained by the home-school visitor who had the experience with dealing with families of the dropout prone and who knew the resources available for problem resolution.

The care call provided an immediate link to the home that conveyed a sense of caring and concern. Reasons were sought for the absence, but the tone of the call was deliberately one of support and an offer of assistance. Illnesses were noted and followed up by school nurses upon the student's return to school. Home problems of needing baby sitters, or someone to shop, or someone to care for animals or family members, were referred to appropriate community agencies. Inquiries were made for the need for gathering homework and for a means for getting that work to the home. In some cases special transportation was arranged for students to make dental and medical appointments and then to return to school rather than to miss a full day because of a half hour appointment. The problem of missing children was avoided as parents were reassured of the school's efforts to let them know when their child had not arrived at school. Conversely, incidents of abuse and neglect were discovered and referrals made to appropriate agencies and supportive services.

Throughout the entire effort the emphasis was placed on problem solving, assistance, cooperation, and helping families to cope with the myriad of logistical, social and psychological problems they faced.



### Attendance Policy

Administrators at all levels were provided with accurate average daily attendance figures for their buildings on a monthly basis. They were also provided all the figures for each other's buildings. A friendly rivalry to improve the rates soon developed.

To foster the concept that faithful attendance was ultimately the responsibility of the student, the high school instituted a new policy that required 8100 contact minutes in class for the awarding of credit. Because there were 180 days of school in the district, with each period composed of 48 minutes, a total of 8640 minutes was available. A student could miss no more than twelve periods of a class and still receive credit. The reasons for the absences were no longer material. Although truancy and unexcused absences remained a disciplinary matter, any absence beyond the twelfth required make-up time.

That make-up time was scheduled on Saturday mornings, after school, and during the summer session. Make-up activities were planned by teachers and devoted to extending the learning outcomes in the classes missed. Make-up sessions were monitored by school administrators.

### Results

The sequential pattern of intervention on a system-wide basis has significantly lowered the dropout and chronic absenteeism pattern.

The dropout rate in the past six years has fallen from a high of 28.73% to under 11%.

The average daily attendance rate has improved from a low of 80% for elementary students and 90% for secondary students to a current high of approximately 93% for elementary students and 96% for secondary students.

During the same period the basic skills scores, as measured by the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, for all levels of students, have risen to the high 60th and low 70th percentiles.

### Summary

Direct, personal, immediate, and caring communication with parents and students remains as the most effective, most genuine, and least costly way to halt an epidemic of chronic absenteeism and dropping out.

When an entire system dedicates itself to facilitating school persistence, many important outcomes can be expected. Students whose impediments to faithful attendance are removed will come to school. Once there, they learn



more, meet with success, improve their self-image, set goals, and achieve beyond their own expectations.

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# The Small School Finds Support in Horace's Compromise

by MR. DAVID GIBSON, Headmaster  
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The Stowe School is a rural, private boarding high school that provides an unusual blend of academic and experiential programs. Students are required to spend a minimum of four weeks each year on outdoor expeditions, and three weeks each year in off-campus community service and life skills apprenticeships. Until recently, the school delivered a traditional academic curriculum during the rest of the school year except for the experiential programs.

A 1982 self-evaluation identified a lack of focus in the curriculum and recommended that the school attempt to establish for academics the kind of spirit and success that the experiential programs had long enjoyed. As the school's response began to take shape, national reports on education were beginning to be published. In the following report we have outlined our journey into a new curriculum.

## **Experience, Individualization, Self-Reliance**

The essential and guiding concepts of our philosophy of education are experience, individualization, and self-reliance. Believing that people learn best by doing, we structure participation of the learner in many educational decisions. We take note of individual differences in learning styles and help students to appreciate and wisely use their growing individuality. We challenge students to test the limits of their personal reserves, to develop confidence through success.

Prior to 1982, our curriculum consisted of courses in English, mathematics, social studies, and other basic high school subjects planned along departmental lines by teachers working independently. With help from academic advisors, students chose from a smorgasbord of courses, fulfilling

requirements mandated by the state and augmented by the school's experiential programs.

In an effort to improve the traditional curriculum, the school experimented with team teaching and learned how to design successful formats. Teachers working with a peer improve their classroom planning and preparation. Team teaching also provides students with a chance to witness adults interacting and learning. Students can hear how an adult poses questions, follows up with more questions and expresses an understanding. Students can see that acknowledging ignorance in an acceptable way leads to further learning. Students can also see that being "intellectual" is acceptable.

In another innovation, we found that interdisciplinary courses could both excite and terrify teachers and students accustomed to textbooks and single subjects. Students and teachers both appreciate the value of seeing connections between subjects, but the ideal of integrating several areas of learning can be difficult to achieve and sustain throughout the year.

Interdisciplinary courses require more diverse resources than traditional single subject courses. Several texts are usually needed. Complete lesson plans and accompanying teaching aids, projects, materials, workbooks, tests and other forms of demonstration of mastery must often be drafted from scratch. Most importantly, the teachers must be comfortable and effective as a guide in areas other than their area of specialization. A supportive administrative structure is needed.

The traditionally designed curriculum was further improved through a structured program of learning styles evaluation and individualization. Information on the learning style of individual students is used to heighten student's awareness of themselves and to stimulate staff discussions of teaching style. Students who recognize and use their learning strengths are self-confident learners, and teachers who use appropriate methods are more effective with their students.

As we developed our new curriculum, we wanted to keep these innovative elements which contributed successfully to students' growth. We sought a unifying design and philosophy that complemented what we knew to be good principles of education.

### The Shape of Things to Come

When the ideas in TheodoreSizer's Horace's Compromise began to appear with other national reports, we found a spokesperson for our curriculum. Many of his suggestions supported the best of our own ideas for curriculum, with the added advantage of being stated by a "prophet from another country." He provided us with a sense of focus and validated our desires to change our curriculum.

In Horace's Compromise, age-grading, long gone from our school's structure, was discouraged so that students could be moved ahead efficiently based on substantive accomplishment. Time spent in classrooms should not be a school's unit of measurement. We provide three levels of classes available to all ages. (see figure 1)



figure 1

The Stowe School Curriculum is arranged at three levels of competency. In the "Foundations" curriculum, students master competencies required by the State of Vermont for graduation from high school. The "Challenge" level competencies are based on a Regents program from New York State. After mastering these, they progress to the "Quest" level. The competencies are those the College Board feels are necessary for students to be successful in college.

All three learning programs have a core of four interdisciplinary courses, Inquiry and Expression, Literature and Arts, Philosophy and History, and Science, Technology and Society. The resources of the school are coordinated through teams of teachers and students working together to explore themes from many different points of view.

At each level, teachers develop measures of accomplishment and students demonstrate mastery before progressing. Students are not "done" with mathematics just because they have "taken it" before. Learning is a life long journey. Subjects should be points of departure for that important quest.

Measuring accomplishment through demonstration of mastery enhances a curriculum that recognizes individual learning styles. Individual differences in learners are occasions for celebration, not a source of dismay to teachers. Learners who recognize their strengths learn to feel proud of themselves, which makes it easier for them to compensate for their weaknesses in learning.

Teachers who are creative in suggesting ways for students to exhibit mastery encourage flexible thinking in students. No longer are "tests" the sole measure of understanding. Doing, drawing and dialogue also demonstrate accomplishment.

To simplify the academic program, we established a required core curriculum of four courses: Inquiry and Expression (IE), Literature and Art (LA), Science, Technology and Society (STS), and Philosophy and History (PH). (see figure 2) Every year our students take all four courses on their own level of skills development.

Depth counts more than "coverage." We focus on essential skills in every course and design the whole school experience to help us impart our own wonder at the unity of knowledge. By establishing a yearly school-wide theme, we create coherence between courses and promote connections in learning. Teachers meet daily with the school's curriculum director and principal to implement unifying ideas.

Last year, under the title "Origins to Futures," the whole curriculum explored origins, parts and wholes, structures, patterns of growth, revolution, and futures. This year, our theme is taken from William Blakes's phrase "To See the World in a Grain of Sand." We are moving from the microscopic to the macroscopic realm in all disciplines.

For example, the PH groups will study self, family, community, state, nation, and world. When they are exploring family relationships, famous families of history, the family in anthropology, and so forth, the STS groups can coordinate with animal families in ecosystems, taxonomic criteria, and the mathematics of relations. Similarly, LA and IE groups will address the central theme through their disciplines.

During the first four-week term at the beginning of the year, all four courses will look at the microscopic element of their area of knowledge. STS courses talk about atoms, elements, postulates and axioms, PH courses look at the self and individualism, LA courses explore the materials of the arts and explore the relationship of parts to wholes in literature and art, and IE provides study skills, and the listening, speaking, reading and writing basic skills.

When the second four week term arrives, the whole core curriculum takes a step toward the macroscopic dimension of the fields of study, coordinated through shared classroom resources and experiences and encouraged by the whole school effort. Students are free to draw connections aided by the curriculum model which suggests and presents parallel concepts to them.

Luckily, our teachers are a bright and enthusiastic group who have no qualms about the superior value of teaching and training for new competencies, not old subjects. We encourage them to think of themselves as generalists who have as much to learn in their speciality area as do their students. We urge them to inspire the quest and the search; to provide a

figure 2

|                                        |                                   |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Science, Technology and Society</b> | <b>Literature and Arts</b>        |
| Basic Mathematics                      | World Literature                  |
| Algebra 1 & 2                          | American Literature               |
| College Algebra                        | Fiction                           |
| Calculus                               | Poetry                            |
| Topics in Finite Mathematics           | Aesthetics                        |
| Computer Programming                   | Painting                          |
| Biology                                | Drawing                           |
| Ecology                                | History of Art and Music          |
| Chemistry                              |                                   |
| Physics                                |                                   |
| <b>Inquiry and Expression</b>          | <b>Philosophy and History</b>     |
| Academic Skills in:                    | World History                     |
| Listening                              | American History                  |
| Speaking                               | Global Issues                     |
| Reading                                | Psychology                        |
| Writing                                | World Religion                    |
| Study Skills                           | Anthropology                      |
| Creative Writing                       |                                   |
| Research                               |                                   |
| Communications                         |                                   |
| Media                                  |                                   |
| Journalism                             |                                   |
| <b>Electives</b>                       | <b>Team and Individual Sports</b> |
| French                                 | Soccer                            |
| Spanish                                | Skiing                            |
| Outdoor Leadership                     | Volleyball                        |
| Stained Glass                          |                                   |
| Photography                            | <b>Recreational Sports</b>        |
| Ceramics                               | Hiking                            |
| Printmaking                            | Biking                            |
| Piano & Guitar                         | Horseback Riding                  |
| Electronic Music                       | Swimming                          |
| Tutorials                              | Rockclimbing                      |
| Independent Studies                    | Whitewater Paddling               |
| College Semester Program               | Golf                              |
|                                        | Fishing                           |

Traditional subjects are addressed thematically by the four core groups. Students may augment core courses with electives. Working with advisors, students choose, or are guided into Foundation, Challenge, or Quest levels in the core areas.

challenge through unanxious expectations; to reinforce the foundations, the new basic skills.

We define as basic, mastery of forms of communication, thinking strategies, social awareness and conduct, creativity and practical life skills. We believe that these areas should be addressed across the curriculum. No one area of study should lay claim to any one of the new basic skills.

We draw from many sources as we help teachers address and reinforce essential skills through the school's theme. Our first year's model for competencies used Vermont, New York Regents, and College Board skill definitions, but we are evolving. By communicating with members of the Coalition of Essential Schools, we have found commonalities in the concerns of educators who are defining essential competencies.

### Teachers Are Learners

For the small school administrator, a new definition of responsibility is required. Our effort toward school improvement requires ongoing inservice, daily administrative guidance, which will lead to changes in school structure and student attitudes toward learning.

We should focus on the adult as a learner first, a guide for others second. How do we share resources, plan, and perform a new kind of curriculum, and how do we know whether we're doing it well? As we address these questions, a new school emerges and is sustained, because it is necessary to pose and answer the questions every day. One inservice day, or even a handful, won't do.

In lieu of school-wide team teaching, which might be the first choice for a new teaching design, we structure team planning by agreeing upon central themes for each term and by providing daily curriculum direction. The theme serves as a focal point for term content objectives and the curriculum director reiterates our desire to have every course address essential skills. Content serves the purpose of building skills for independent and life-long learning and growth.

During every hour of the school day, groups of teachers meet to plan and implement their ideas. The curriculum director meets with them to share ideas from other groups, to help them find resources, to discuss the problems inherent in teaching, and to help them develop interpretations of the theme for the term's focus.

Teachers are encouraged to visit one another's class as guest speakers, or simply as learners, because their presence adds so much to the academic atmosphere of a class session. The days of the lonely teacher standing unaided in front of a class are gone.

Sharing of reading assignments, films, and homework is encouraged so that students can begin to sense the educational enterprise as a whole experience. For example, a film seen and discussed in one class period may be written about, or artistically expressed, in another class.

Teachers need daily time to develop these ideas. They need to be able to share ideas with others regularly, and they need to be guided into productive partnerships with each other. Administrative supervision should model the kind of relationship we desire between teachers and students.

I'm glad to say that some things "rub off." Enthusiasm, support, individual attention, success oriented evaluation, and plenty of praise works wonders with teachers too. When teachers discover the process in action on themselves, and witness learning in themselves, they can better imagine how to recreate the experience with teachers.

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# Murray High School Highlights

by MR. BILL WELLS, Principal  
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Communications is critical to any business or school system. That is why I started and developed a radio concept called "Murray High School Highlights." Implementation of this idea is free; nearly any school system can do it. It is particularly apt for rural and smaller schools.

The idea of a radio show originated with Bill Nelson, Superintendent of Schools for Bond Unit #2 School District in Greenville, Illinois. In one of our administrative meetings in 1979, he asked for public relations ideas to better inform the public about what was going on at the high school. I responded to Mr. Nelson's question by saying, "How about a radio show telling about Greenville High School"? Mr. Nelson's response was, "Great, you do it." That was the birth of "Greenville High School Highlights."

The local radio station in Greenville, WSMI, gave us ten minutes of air time. We supplied the tapes and took them to the radio station. During my time there, I did 118 episodes.

In July 1982, I was named principal of Murray High School in Murray, Kentucky. I felt there was no better way to meet students in a one-on-one situation than being able to interview them on the radio. WSJP in Murray has run the program as a public service since that time. To date, I have taped 128 radio shows with each show approximately 10 minutes in length. I have provided 1,280 minutes of free advertising for Murray High School.

In 1984, Murray High School was the first and only Kentucky school to receive the Secondary School Recognition Award from the United States Department of Education. One of our more positive evaluation points from the U.S. Department of Education was the innovative communication avenues that we used.

From the principal's standpoint, I look forward to the radio show because it means I have the opportunity to talk to a successful high school student at least once a week. Not many principals get to do that.

The show generally features a leader in some aspect of high school life. Fortunately we have many successful students, so the choice is almost

limitless. Any school has many positive leaders and it is important to recognize them for being successful and give them feedback.

The format of the show consists of describing the events for the upcoming week and then focuses a student and his/her area of success. I usually interview individuals such as the student council president, the valedictorian of the class, or the lead in the school play. I also interview the captains of sports teams as well as leaders of extra-curricular activities. When the Kentucky State School Board met in Murray, I had the State Superintendent on the show. For the 100th show, I interviewed the superintendent of Murray City Schools. The practice can thus highlight events external to the school as well as local events and people.

Over the years, I have developed the following practices to help assure a smooth broadcast:

1. Students to be interviewed are invited in after school before broadcast. I ask them the same questions--before taping--so that there are no surprises. Running through it once puts all of us at ease. I ask the questions in the same order, too.
2. The "run-through" also helps to spot where a question may be framed poorly, or result in an answer that is too brief. The run-through can discourage "yes," "no," or "maybe" responses.
3. If a student is especially nervous, I might hand them a telephone to speak into. It's surprising how this comforts some people.
4. I always begin by reviewing some of the events that will be going on during the week.
5. I generally say the names of the parents in introducing the interviewees--another reinforcing tie to the community.
6. I often ask students what advice they can offer for incoming freshmen. This offers something special to younger students who may be listening.
7. Other techniques I might use are asking students to describe their academic courses, to name colleges they are considering, or to list extracurricular activities or offices held. This gives a plug for other parts of our whole school program as well.
8. I like to ask "What do you think about..." questions that demonstrate our students ability to analyze, put things together, to evaluate, and to reflect on their experiences.
9. I always hold the microphone. A glance at the clock or a movement of my arm can send a signal to a student who is starting to ramble. I can then interrupt with a "thank you," or a follow-up question, or go into sign-off to close the program.

A unique aspect of the radio show is not knowing whom I will be interviewing until approximately two weeks prior to broadcast. I do not know who will be elected to the student council position, catch the winning touchdown in the football game, or win the state speech contest. This makes it more exciting for me as well as providing interest for listeners.

I look forward to vacation time because we have Murray High School graduates that have gone on to success in college or business areas. They return, via radio, to tell us about the foundation we provided for them at Murray High School.

The benefits of a radio show are numerous. It provides the students with recognition as well as some realistic speech experience, the interviewer with better knowledge of a school activity, and the radio station with a larger listening base when friends and family tune in to listen to someone they know will be on the radio. It is free, positive communication between the school and the community.

I would be happy to provide further information about this realistic idea for public relations.

# Lemons to Lemonade

by MRS. JUDITH N. HUNT, Principal  
Princeton Schools  
Princeton, Massachusetts

The phrase "Handling Critical Situations" only begins to describe the fateful year of 1980-81. "Rookie to seasoned veteran in 180 short days" better describes the first year of my principalship in Princeton, Massachusetts.

After a week on the job, I came to realize that having been head of a small special needs collaborative didn't even begin to prepare me to deal with a staff of 50, nearly 400 children, 2 schools, and what seemed like twice that number of parents. Those first few months were a monumental learning experience for me.

That September there were rumblings in Massachusetts of a proposed bill called Proposition 2-1/2 which was a taxcap referendum that limited the amount by which Massachusetts cities and towns could raise taxes to cover operating costs in a given year. In my heart I knew the voters of the Commonwealth would never do that to me in my first principalship. Wrong--not only did they vote to pass it; they did it overwhelmingly.

In April of 1981 I felt it was truly raining lemons. I had come into this principalship fully determined to make Princeton the best school in the state. My timeline for this miracle was two years.

At Budget Subcommittees that spring I found myself having to face some tough realities. A review of the Basic Skills and IOWA testing indicated that my schools had the worst Achievement Test scores in the five town district. Furthermore, the budget indicated that it would be necessary to RIF 30% of the staff, raising the average teacher age from 29 to 38 years old. I was faced with a 20% reduction of a budget that could only have been described as very conservative in years past. The school was faced with a year without art, band, remedial reading, or library. Physical education was reduced. Instead of 18 students in a class, there were to be 29 to 31.

Also, there were no field trips, no new equipment budgeted, and science and social studies were cut to half their normal time because of lack of staff.

I figured I had two ways to go. I could cry continually and make everyone around me miserable or hitch up my skirts and come up with a plan of action. I chose Option 2. It was at this time I remembered the words of my father and

favorite philosopher, "When you find yourself sitting there with a bunch of lemons you might as well get up and make lemonade."

So it was on a rainy April evening that I came up with the **Princeton Plan**. I gave it a fancy name so people would think it was exciting and innovative. The plan was developed to give the demoralized teachers and the Princeton townspeople some hope for the future of their schools. I wanted to show them a possible way to overcome some of the impact of this new law on our schools and to make them believe that we could survive educationally in an otherwise drastic situation. The trick was to take the time to inform the parents and teachers and work on gaining support while being open to new ideas.

One aspect of a rural community is the "spirit" which can be generated throughout the town when times are tough. Not only the staff, but the townspeople went out of their way to support the idea. A parent group called Friends of Princeton Schools was formed to help augment lost services such as field trips and other enrichment activities. Many parents volunteered to come into the schools to help in classrooms, an activity of low priority before this time. Teachers rallied around the **Princeton Plan**, despite its limitations, and were anxious to help set up some of the new programs and contributed an endless stream of ideas to help make the plan successful. The plan itself was quite simple but turned out to be very effective in uniting the town and teachers behind the schools.

### Plan of Action

We developed a flexible teaching schedule to overcome the loss of staff. Where we had six teachers in the Intermediate school, we now had five. Through scheduling we developed mixed level classes and taught science the first half of the year and social studies the last. A similar grouping was set up in the primary grades. We budgeted two aides (plus the one teacher) for the kindergarten to help overcome the fact that two sessions had become one session of 34 children.

To address the issue of poor achievement scores, we organized a comprehensive testing program for grades K-8. All children in grades 2-8 are given a reading test each September to measure yearly progress. Iowa tests are given in the spring to grades 2-4-6. Teachers are asked to submit expository writing samples for each student in September and June of each school year. These are scored holistically and ranked, and each child has a cumulative writing folder which will eventually cover his/her 8 years in the school system.

With the teachers' help, we formed four study committees and together we looked at the math, reading, and social studies curriculum for our school. We

also studied time on task and made some drastic changes in this area. The outcome was a vastly improved language arts curriculum, recommendations for new social studies curriculum, and a new math curriculum introducing computers. The Special Education Tutorial program was assessed and a Resource Room model was developed which increased the number of children served by 30%.

With the help of the junior high staff, which consisted of four teachers, we looked at the curriculum at this level and decided we needed to strengthen the traditional four course curriculum which existed presently in order to make it more exciting. Without increasing the staff, and primarily because of the diversity and excellence of the teachers involved, we added mechanical drawing, developmental reading, great books, drug and alcohol education, computer science, and speed reading to the course offerings. I simply asked them what else they'd like to teach. Since there were virtually no specialists to complicate the schedule, we just added these courses. The junior high came alive with the excitement generated by these changes. This excitement spread to parents and students alike the following September.

With help from the primary teachers we wrote a Nutrition Grant entitled "Tummie" which supplied us with funding for an exciting new program. It was out of this grant that we rewrote the elementary science curriculum in order to integrate the nutrition materials developed by an ingenious second grade teacher. While we were at it we wrote two Commonwealth Inservice grants to provide for Inservice Training for all staff in the areas of drug education and developing a writing curriculum.

In March I wrote a Chapter I grant in order to get a computer for our remedial program. This enabled us to run a rather innovative Chapter I math program.

We did all of this in four months time. What we succeeded in doing was not only overcoming the dreadful feeling of malaise which fell upon us with the passing of this bill, but we really turned the schools around. None of this would have been possible without a staff willing to put in some long hours, to think creatively, and to try some new ideas and a community that trusted our ability to make this plan work. Also very important was the fact that the School Committee and the Assistant Superintendent, William F. Carey, allowed me to dream and supported our plan and ideas.

The next year, faced with the same financial constraints, saw the birth of perhaps the most exciting idea tried in the Princeton Schools. The idea of an alternating kindergarten plan began to emerge. Because of a substantial increase in the kindergarten population we now had two sessions. Why not, I asked, run kindergarten all day every other day and have two half days on Friday. This would save upward of \$7,000 in busing and add 135 hours of instructional time to the kindergarten curriculum. It would also solve the

problem of extended noon bus routes which ran over an hour because of the rural nature of the town.

The idea was financially motivated, but research convinced me that it had statistical merit and was, in fact, practiced in small towns in the Midwest. There was good evidence to prove that increased time on task at the kindergarten level leads to increased readiness.

Once again the Assistant Superintendent and the School Committee lent their support to the idea. The most important next step was to sell the parents. At the spring kindergarten orientation meeting I presented the plan, backed by the research, to the parents. They were wonderfully supportive, excited by the idea, and delighted by the shorter bus ride. A plus I had not anticipated was that the working parents were very much in favor of it. They no longer had to worry about their child being bused to a sitter at noon. They knew where their child was all day, whichever day it was.

There was one little snafu in the plan. In November, when the kindergarten had been in session three months, I learned that the program I was so proudly running was illegal in Massachusetts! Only with the endless help and guidance of the new Director of the Regional Center for the Massachusetts Department of Education, Joan Schuman, were we able to organize a research proposal and present it to the Board of Education in June. It passed, and Princeton is now involved in a three year state wide study of alternative kindergarten programs, with ours being the alternating day model. Other models include traditional half-day, all day every day and extended day.

It is now five years since Proposition 2-1/2 hit our school. Surprisingly, we are in good shape. We now have twelve computers and a good program for their use in the school. Our achievement scores have increased dramatically and we are now competitive with the other district towns. We have new math and social studies texts and junior high science texts. We have updated curriculums in math, reading, language arts, and science. We have implemented an Early Prevention of School Failure program in kindergarten through an Early Childhood Grant and are in our final year of the three year kindergarten project.

While these have been the toughest and most stressful years of my career, they have also been the most creative and challenging. I wouldn't trade my rural school, the staff, School Committee, or townspeople for anything. While I do know that the years ahead will be a continual battle because of fiscal restraints, I know Princeton is up to it. Only in a small town could a principal be so aware of community support, caring concern on the part of town fathers, and feel the closeness of a staff who genuinely care about the level of education given our children.

# Helping a Staff Cope with Change: From Junior High to Middle School

by MS. ADELINE MERRILL, House Administrator  
East Ridge Middle School  
Ridgefield, Connecticut

In my suburban community, the decision to convert the traditional junior high to a middle school was made several years ago. The Superintendent, the Director of Middle School Education and the Board of Education worked toward creating an innovative middle school. Advice and direction were sought from Columbia University, other middle schools, research and specialists. We are now in the final stages of the transition and the 6th graders will be joining us for the first time in September of 1985.

Although there has been interest and excitement about the transition to middle school status, many staff members have expressed confusion or anxiety about their roles in the new school design. Generally, the concerns and complaints are caused by a fear of change. Creating the type of middle school mandated by the Board of Education will require that staff members adapt to many changes in September. For example, there will be changes in:

1. PHILOSOPHY. The child-centered middle school philosophy will replace the traditional departmentalized approach.
2. CURRICULA. Major alterations will be made in each department as they will all incorporate the various 6th grade curricula.
3. TEACHING METHODS. Team teaching will be emphasized.
4. SCHOOL POPULATION. In September the student and staff population will increase by 30%.
5. SCHOOL ORGANIZATION. A "house" concept will place students and staff in one of three "houses" which have their own guidance counselors, administrators and teaching teams.



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6. **ADMINISTRATION.** In addition to the Director, there will be supervision by House Administrators.
7. **LOCATION.** In order to make room for the 6th, 7th and 8th grade teaching teams as well as the new instructional programs, most teachers will be assigned to different classrooms.

A visible administrator is a crucial figure in a school that is undergoing such major alterations in its structure and philosophy. It is up to the administrator to make the staff feel they are part of the change process not just victims of it. This can be done by focusing on several areas that are of concern to staff members.

### Defining Roles and Expectations

Nothing makes people more nervous than not knowing where they will "fit in" and what they are supposed to do. A clear definition of the school's goals, philosophy and organizational plan is essential. This can be accomplished through frequent departmental meetings and staff development sessions; it is also helpful to provide a "map" which outlines the new classroom locations of the teams and "houses." Staff members must know their immediate supervisor and the supervisors must work with each teacher to assuage fears and incorporate legitimate suggestions for improvement. Particular effort must be made to welcome teachers who are transferred from other buildings within the district. Whenever possible, they should be invited to spend a day or a few hours in the building so that they can meet department members and administrators as well as inspect their new classrooms. Regular contact by telephone and letters should be maintained with these teachers who have special requirements due to their displacement from another school.

### Assessing Basic Needs

A willingness to listen to staff members' comments and complaints will allow the administration to focus on important areas that might otherwise be overlooked. Thus, it is beneficial for supervisors to be present at department meetings and team meetings. Each department will be affected by the transition in unique ways and the staff wants to know that the administration will acknowledge these special considerations. If their needs are assessed early enough in the transition period, staff members can work with administration to ensure that satisfactory solutions can be found; in this way, teachers will feel that they have some investment in the changes in their departments. Furthermore, cafeteria workers, custodians, secretaries and aides often have

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insight about ways to improve day to day procedures that will make life easier for everyone concerned.

### Adapting the Physical Plant

When staff members can actually see where they will be located and that everything will fit in the building, they begin to feel more comfortable with change. It may be necessary to "clean house," however, to make room for the additional staff and students. East Ridge Middle School conducted a school wide clean up campaign in all rooms and departments before teachers moved to their new classrooms. For several weeks, teachers perused shelves, cabinets and closets, looking for outdated textbooks. A community book give away program was held; vast quantities of outdated textbooks were offered to the public or discarded if no one claimed them. A map which outlined the new classroom assignments was distributed. Then, a mutually agreed upon moving schedule was created by custodians and teachers so that everyone did not require assistance with shifting cartons and desks on the same day. Attention was given to requests for additional pieces of equipment, such as the need for extra tables for the cafeteria, book shelves for the reading department and electrical outlets for the new computer room.

### Serving as a Positive Example of an Agent of Change

Administrators should maintain a high degree of visibility during a time of transition so that a positive attitude about the change can be communicated. Casual as well as more formal discussions between staff and administrators lead to a feeling on the part of the teachers that someone in the main office can see the impact that the changes will have on the school. Furthermore, it is usually the administrators who attend conferences and visit other innovative schools where exciting changes are occurring. This information should be shared with the faculty so that they can also feel that their school isn't the only one experiencing the difficulties inherent in a major transition. If possible, teachers should be allowed to visit other schools and to witness innovative methods in progress.

### Creating Effective Communication

Many groups will be interested in and worried about a transition to a middle school. If an efficient and responsive communication network is set up, information can be passed along quickly so that frustration and anxiety can

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be alleviated. Committees and task forces which include parents, teachers, administrators and students are a valuable tool in all stages of the transition. It is here that administrators must provide information about the positive aspects of the middle school concept. Once teachers and parents see the advantages in such a system, they will be committed to the project. Once they are committed to the change, they will act as proponents of the project and seek out ways to improve it. Newsletters and press releases should also be sent out on a regular basis by these committees so that the parents as well as the staff members are informed of each stage of the transition. Administrators can thus be seen as a part of the process, not as autocrats forcing their ideas on everyone else.

As psychiatrists know, any kind of change can be threatening to people. Once a school's leadership decides that changes are necessary for the well being of its students and staff, it is up to the administrators in the building to devise methods to alleviate anxiety and to help the staff see that the changes are, indeed, for the better.

# Personalizing Education: Teachers as Advisors

by DR. KATHLEEN R. FLANAGAN, Assistant Professor  
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Consolidation of rural and small schools in the name of economics and efficiency has frequently resulted in a loss of identity for members of small communities. One result of this loss of school-community identity is the lack of a sense of partnership among parents, teachers and students. This factor, along with the emerging body of research dealing with self-concept development, learning style variation, and age-stage theories, suggests the need for a building-based effort to individualize and personalize learning programs for each student. Described in this article is one approach which has proven successful in meeting this need by helping students develop a stronger sense of control over their own learning programs, and by fostering a sense of partnership with the parents of those students. Examples of implementation reflect a composite of experiences the author has had as a teacher and administrator in two small schools participating in the Individually Guided Education (IGE) Program developed by I/D/E/A, the educational affiliate of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation.

The Advisor/Advisee Program (also referred to in the literature as The Teacher/Advisor System) makes use of a key idea from the research on self concept: the role of the "significant other" in helping individuals formulate and reshape their self-image in such areas as academic achievement and social acceptance. In this program, each teacher in a building serves as an advisor to a group of 15-20 students. Groups remain together, with the same advisor, for the entire time a student is in a particular phase of the program, such as middle school or senior high. Members of an advisee group may be of a single grade, or may come from a two or three grade span. Daily or weekly advising periods are built into the master schedule.

In our school, advisee groups of 15-18 students met once a week during a rotating period schedule. In addition, advisors met as needed with individual advisees. As an IGE school, we were using multi-age grouping patterns for classes, and found it natural to establish advisee groups on a similar basis. In the primary section we mixed grades 1-3, intermediate grades 4-6, and in the

upper grades 7 and 8 were together. In the secondary area we used combinations of 9-10, 10-11, and 11-12. We tried and rejected using a three grade span with older students, as maturity differences seemed to hinder many of the group activities.

The advisor/advisee program has three major components. They are:

1. Human Development Activities
2. Program Planning
3. Reporting to Parents

Human development activities are selected or designed to foster positive self-concept attainment as well as interpersonal skills. Through structured activities, students learn to evaluate personal strengths and identify areas needing improvement. Goal-setting sessions provide an opportunity to turn self evaluation into an action plan through the careful selection of appropriate learning experiences. Sharing activities promote self-expression, listening skills, and respect for the viewpoints of others.

Of the three components in the advisor program, human development activities posed the greatest challenge for our teachers. Little if anything in the formal preparation of classroom teachers prepares them to deal with value clarification, group dynamics, self-concept development, or social problem solving. We found key resource people in our guidance counselor and school psychologist. Many smaller schools do not have a counselor on site, but we found both our "shared" counselor and the district's school psychologist willing to provide staff development activities to prepare advisors to work in the human development area. Teachers also became more aware of available services and used them more frequently when advisees had special needs. As teachers became more comfortable with human development activities, they shared successful techniques. Soon a resource pool developed in our own school.

The second component of the advisor program is program planning. Even in a small school, this can be an impersonal process as students move from grade to grade taking courses prescribed by a set school curriculum or rigid tracking system. Through individual advising sessions our teachers helped students progressively develop responsibility for designing appropriate learning programs. Factors such as learning style, career aspirations, and special interests were assessed. With these data as a basis for decision-making, our students learned to set realistic goals for their own learning programs.

Small schools can provide many learning options, especially if independent study is included. With the assistance of their advisors, selected seniors in our school designed and carried out extended field-based learning

experiences. For example, one senior who had worked on the school paper since his freshman year spent a nine-week internship with a local newspaper, studying all aspects of production from writing and editing to layout and printing. He became the first freshman editor of his college's paper, and went on to pursue a career in journalism.

The third component of the advisor/advisee system is program reporting. The customary printed report cards and an occasional open house do not provide an active communication channel for parents, teachers, or students. Particularly in secondary schools where a student has many teachers, lack of coordination may have negative effects for an individual learner. In the advisor program, a teacher has full responsibility for reporting to the parents of 15-20 advisees. The teacher, having spent an extended period of time working with each advisee, is better prepared to give and receive information which may be vital to a student's development. A feature of the reporting process is the involvement of students. During parent-student-teacher conferences, scheduled at the end of each report period, students play a key role in reviewing progress to date. They may also participate in outlining major goals for the future, as well as intended means of achieving them. The contribution of the student at these conferences increases across time as the student matures and is able to assume more responsibility. For example, younger learners may show papers or projects completed and explain what each covered, while teachers assume responsibility for describing achievement in relation to intended learning outcomes, along with plans for the future. Older students may discuss purposes for past work, how well they have achieved goals to date, and areas they have identified for self-improvement during the next report period. In all cases, parents are encouraged to be active partners in the learning process. With older students, advisors often play the role of facilitator as parents and students explore career options and aspirations.

Initially, the participation of students in traditional parent-teacher conferences in our school met with resistance from all three groups. Parents wondered how they were going to be able to discuss things they did not want their children to hear, while students worried about what would happen when parents and teachers matched up the stories students had been telling to each separately. Teachers seemed to have the general apprehension associated with implementing any new process. We decided to phase in the new reporting process across a full school year. Since we held conferences at the end of each quarter, we decided to start the three-way conferences in the fall with those who immediately responded most positively. Our long-range goal was to have all students at conferences by the end of the fourth quarter. As with the human development activities described earlier, positive experiences resulted in an increased comfort level with the new process, and soon the educational partnership became a reality.

How does a school begin to implement an advisor/advisee program? Based on experience, we would suggest beginning with an overview conference in which the components of the advisor program are examined and discussed fully by the school faculty. By design, the advisor program is intended to be adapted to meet local needs rather than adopted as a perfect plan. Once teachers agree to the basic plan, a timeline should be developed. Many implementation efforts in schools meet with failure because they are perceived as "quick fixes." The advisor program is based on trust, and trust takes time to develop. A realistic timeline must provide for staff development activities related to the three program components. The advising period should become an established part of the master schedule to insure recognition as an integral part of the school program. Education for new roles should also be planned for students and parents.

A process for assigning advisors/advisees should be designed. Younger students are often assigned to an advisor, while older students participate in the selection process. During the program design phase, our teachers determined criteria for balancing advisee groups. After receiving an explanation of the program, our older students listed their top three choices for an advisor. Initial advisee groups were established using student preferences, and as our experience with the program unfolded, adjustments were made to groups as needed. New teachers, or those who are less comfortable with the advising program, may be assigned as co-advisors with experienced colleagues until they are ready to advise a group of their own.

The advisor/advisee program is one approach which has been successful in personalizing education and promoting a sense of partnership in school communities of all sizes. By design, each student in this program has a warm, trusting relationship with at least one adult in the school. Knowing someone cares can have a positive impact on an individual's self-concept. Parents have one source to contact when concerns arise, and they know their views are valued in the educational program of their child. Teachers reap benefits from the advisor program in many ways. Sharing information about advisees enables teachers to provide for special needs of individual students. Identification of causes of discipline problems may lead to their reduction or elimination. Staff development activities often provide a professional renewal for experienced teachers. A most important dividend of the advisor/advisee program, however, is the progressive development of self-directed learners who are able to make informed, realistic choices about appropriate learning experiences, and who know where to go for help when they need it.

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# Positive School Environment

by MR. DONALD JOSTWORTH, Principal  
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Endless articles on education in periodicals, endless courses taught at colleges can tell you the correct way to create a successful school. But no number of special courses and curriculum changes can make a child like your school. We have yet to see a child who appreciates the fine points inherent in a school's use of Graded Courses of Study. Children are basic beings, impressed by relatively simple things that appeal to the five senses. Helping students like their school should be the cornerstone of school philosophy. Another cornerstone is gaining the friendship of parents and the rest of the community. Without these, nothing of worth can be achieved. With these, more can be achieved than originally thought possible.

By far the easiest and, in our opinion, the most dangerous demeanor a school can wear is one of blandness. Lack of color, both in the physical surroundings and in the emotional make-up of the teachers and administrators, is reflected in the students' behavior and in their attitudes toward school. If all that students can hope for is a daily confrontation with dyspeptic-looking colors in the hallways and classrooms, and with teachers who consider the lesson plans they first typed up in '69 to be sufficient for '85, then students are not likely to give any more than they get. Boredom breeds contempt, and contempt, too often, breeds "antisocial" behavior. We offer no argument regarding the fact that it is not easy to escape the ruts that a school can fall into. Fighting the way out of the ruts may be one of the most difficult things for a school to undertake.

William Henry Harrison Junior School had run pretty much as usual from 1969 to 1983. The hallways were the same pea-green they'd been since they were first painted in 1958, when the school opened (as a high school). The lockers were medium brown and much-scraped and worn. There had never been any serious vandalism, but everything seemed to be in need of repair. When Don Jostworth became Principal in 1982, he decided to do all in his power to

improve the school: curriculum, graded course of study, extracurricular activities for students, faculty-administration communication, community relations, ad infinity. But...and this turned out to be the wisest choice of all...he started with the physical aspect of the building itself. Clerk-treasurers turned purple and maintenance crews turned pale, but little by little money was spent and worktime was found, and in the course of one summer the cleaning-painting-waxing-refurbishing became a reality. It was during this time that the "magic" started happening. Janitors, teachers dropping by, parents stopping in--all were inspired to make still further suggestions. And no suggestion was dismissed without careful consideration. Indeed, most were set in motion. A local group, Shaker Farms Garden Club, heard we were doing a lot of fixing-up indoors, and they volunteered to do some work outdoors, donating geraniums and other ornamentals which they planted, as a club project, in our school sign/planter. The art teacher and the librarian, both talented artists, were intrigued by the suggestion that murals be painted at intervals in the hallways. Result: five colorful murals (and two more the following summer, and still another this past summer). Concrete block "columns" that extend about half a foot from the hall walls were painted in bright, solid colors. Old lockers were repainted in a lighter color. When school started at the end of August, the building was the talk of the community. Parents came every day to see the new look, and everyone was impressed. And then we noticed the change in students' attitudes.

The first thing that attracted the notice of the entire staff was the lack of paper left lying on the floor in the hallways. Could it be that the brightness of the school, the fresh walls, the murals, were having a positive effect on the students? Yes, we decided. One minor instance: the school is always available for use by community organizations, athletic teams, and so on. One evening, a group of "our" kids, who had just finished basketball practice, saw a few elementary school students, who were there for a special community karate class, investigating a poster in the downstairs hallway just a little too closely (our posters are generally made by the art teacher or by the librarian, and we're proud of the creative use of cut-out figures and collage materials they use...making each poster a unique artwork). Our students warned the younger ones that we don't touch our posters or "mess them up." It was around this time that we realized we had something good going on. For over a hundred years, posters have been things idlers draw moustaches on. No one cared. But all of a sudden, some of our kids did care. And we weren't about to let them stop caring.

We had increased our listing of student activities, competitions, awards, and other incentives. We continued to do so, and still add more each year. Gradually involving more and more teachers in student-based activities has had a very positive effect in student-teacher relations. Besides "ordinary" things like noontime intramural games, we added an academic contest we call "The

Brain Game." Invented by longtime English teacher, John Flanagan, the Brain Game is a reference book-oriented scavenger hunt in which home rooms compete against each other in finding the answers to questions that range from sports to botany, from music to literature. Each month, the home room that wins the Brain Game is permitted an extra period of noon recess (when they would normally be in noon study hall). Other incentive programs don't even require physical prowess (like noon intramurals) or mental prowess (like the Brain Game). One, the Perfect Attendance Award, presents each perfect attendee with a free softdrink at lunchtime on a given date at four week intervals. All a student has to do is come to school. And our attendance is, at present, 94%. More brainpower again for the Good Grades Movie: students with good grades at the end of each grading period are released from afternoon classes to see a free movie in the auditorium. Each grading period, the qualifications are changed in order to give more students a chance: 1st grading period, one must have no F's; 2nd grading period, no D's or F's, and so on.

Following are lists of our extra-curricular activities, awards, etc. All of these are in effect at this time. Naturally, we didn't begin all the programs at the same time, but added them gradually month after month, year after year.

#### AWARDS

1. Academic "H"
2. Perfect attendance for each semester and the year
3. No discipline referrals for the grading period--letter home
4. Straight "A"-- Cincinnati Reds tickets
5. Intramural champions parties--trophy
6. Pepsi Day last Friday of each month for:
  - No absences
  - No discipline referrals
7. Movie after each grading period
  - 1st No F's on report card
  - 2nd No D's or F's
  - 3rd No D's or F's
8. Student of the Week
9. Awards Day Program--top student in each subject, certificates for "A" students
10. Brain Game Championship
11. Athletic Award "H"
12. Birthday Cards
13. Success-O-Grams
14. Honor Roll
15. Honor Society
16. Student Athlete--per sport season, Boy and Girl Award
17. Principal's Award--Awards Day
18. Citizenship Award--one from each 8th grade homeroom

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### EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

|                                                                               |                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Student Council<br>Two representatives from<br>each home room                 | Stock Market Competition<br>at University of Cincinnati |
| Foreign pen pals                                                              | Intramural Basketball League                            |
| Tutoring Program                                                              | Mid-West Talent Search                                  |
| Career speakers                                                               | Northwestern University                                 |
| Two drama productions per year                                                | Majorettes                                              |
| Poster Contests                                                               | Science Fair                                            |
| Teacher Pie Eating Contest                                                    | Three dances per year                                   |
| Christmas Door Decorating Contest                                             | Teacher-Student Dodgeball Game                          |
| Band Chorus Christmas Program                                                 | Spirit Week                                             |
| Home Ec. Punch Cookie Party<br>for teachers and administrators                | Dragster racing contest-Ind. Arts                       |
| Collect canned goods for Mayor's Fund                                         | School wide candy sale                                  |
| Intramural program daily--home room<br>competition at noon time               | Collect toys for Harrison J.C.'s                        |
| Book Fair                                                                     | Pep Assemblies                                          |
| Perfect Attendance Certificate<br>each semester                               | Club meetings--once each month                          |
| Eighth Grade trip to Washington, D.C.                                         | Read-a-Thon                                             |
| AAA National Traffic<br>Safety Poster Program                                 | Travelogue Assembly                                     |
| All Arts Festival--includes ind. arts,<br>home ec., art, & English Department | Sports Banquet                                          |
| Christmas Lunch for Senior Citizens--<br>Honor Society, art, home ec.         | Parents football breakfast                              |
| Play Day--Last Friday of school year<br>before exams                          | Annual Band Trip                                        |
| Ind. Arts & Science Rocket Contest                                            | Music Festival (competition)                            |
| Free movie for students meeting<br>grade requirement                          | Career Day                                              |
| Honor Letters for<br>maintaining 3.5 average                                  | Music and Band                                          |
| Athletics                                                                     | Spelling Bee Contest                                    |
| Student Council Exchange with<br>3 Rivers and Bridgetown                      | Cincinnati Post                                         |
| Band & Chorus concerts to<br>elementary schools                               | Eighth Grade Banquet & Dance                            |
| Outstanding 7th & 8th grade<br>Science Student                                | Student-Teacher Basketball Game                         |
|                                                                               | Math-a-Thon                                             |
|                                                                               | Jazz Band                                               |
|                                                                               | Glee Club                                               |
|                                                                               | Monthly Homeroom Brain Game                             |
|                                                                               | Monthly Pepsi Day                                       |
|                                                                               | Pep Club                                                |
|                                                                               | Annual Jr. School Musical                               |
|                                                                               | Honor Society                                           |
|                                                                               | Right to Read Week Competitions                         |
|                                                                               | Computer lab during study hall                          |
|                                                                               | Peer Counseling with high school                        |
|                                                                               | Student newspaper                                       |
|                                                                               | Playhouse in the Park                                   |

Many of these are very simple programs to set in motion, and many are somewhat involved. We consider them all to be important for this reason: if we can convince children to like going to school, even if it is for only one or two minor reasons, then we have won a battle. The children, of course, are the real winners, and with our encouragement they can continue to win for the rest of their school career, and for the rest of their lives.

If the children like school, then the parents will like it as well. And parents and other members of the community are our most important supporters. We keep a permanent "open house" invitation to all parents, reinforcing it in the monthly newsletters, local newspaper articles, and school newspapers. Our yearly Christmas season Senior Citizens' Day is one of our most popular events. The older community members love having their grandparents at school, even if they are only adopted-for-one-day grandparents. Our school band does tours of the Senior Citizens' Centers, too. School people should go out into the community and be seen. The community is willing to come help you, and they are just as willing to be visited by and helped by the school and its people.

Principals should listen to everyone's ideas, and especially to those of students. It's their school, too, and they should have some say in what happens. We have tried more things in the past three years than most schools have tried in thirty. Some plans have failed (it is always interesting to see how they fail). Some failures are quiet deaths, some are hilarious explosions. All are learning experiences for everyone; administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, and community members. And all of these people should be continually trying out new plans, new ideas. Pure insanity? Yes, at times it is, but we are surprised how refreshing a little rampant insanity is to a bored student body and a bored faculty. No amount of fancy equipment and complex lesson plans can take the place of the two free necessities; positive attitude and imagination. Both of these are readily available. Just let them happen.

# Lives of a Rural Principal

by MR. EDWARD ROBERT WILKENS, Principal  
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In the days before public kindergarten became popular, Mrs. Smithson's private, half-day preschool prepared me reasonably well for life as an elementary school student. I entered first grade in 1959, moderately socialized and equipped with reading and math readiness.

Two years ago, after 19 years as a student, I reentered elementary school. This time as a principal. And this time, despite an array of academic credentials garnered since 1959, I was probably no better prepared than Mrs. Smithson had made me for first grade.

I did have a BA in English literature and an MEd focused on administration and planning, with courses such as Public School Finance 344, School Law 312, Curriculum Concepts and Development 377, and Organizational Leadership 308 behind me. The courses were interesting and necessary. Actually, only some of the courses were interesting--but, according to the state certification board, all were necessary.

Surely no one on the state certification board is now, or remembers ever having been, a rural elementary school principal. If such a board member existed, he or she would have dictated additional, more practical certification requirements. The three areas that should be addressed can be broadly catalogued as Mechanics, Nature, and People.

During my first two years as principal of a small, rural, elementary school I have encountered a spectrum of situations, problems, and emergencies, none of which was even peripherally considered during my graduate training for this job. That is no one's fault; it is simply not possible to anticipate, much less gain practice necessary to cope with, such aspects of the principalship as backed-up sewer lines, lost teeth, a wandering bull, a parent with a clumsy left hook, and the People's Republic of China.

### Encounter with a Bus

Of mechanics, nature, and people, the area that I am least comfortable with and knowledgeable about is mechanics. The extent of my automotive mechanical aptitude is turning the key, buying gasoline, and occasionally changing the oil.

Yet, one snowy, windy morning a bus driver thought it essential that I join him in inspecting the cracked leaf springs on a bus. We went to the lot, and he slid under the bus. I was content to crouch gingerly alongside and peer under the vehicle, avoiding the oiled and muddied slush as much as possible. Herschel, not satisfied with such a cursory investigation, urged me under the bus with him. He wanted me to be as informed as he, so I ignored the fact that I was wearing my best suit for a meeting later that day at the state department, and I crawled--as much as possible on toes and fingertips--under the bus to the damage site to frown and shake my head knowingly at the cracked springs.

Since that morning I have grown even more familiar with our buses. I have delivered gas, transported damaged heater coils, ridden in, helped jump start, and driven the buses enough to satisfy any latent curiosity I may have had about their mechanical psyches.

If I am not an accomplished mechanic, I am even less a plumber, but I have gained the sensitivity no longer to question why plumbers get \$25 per hour. At the end of an otherwise uneventful day, I met with a substitute teacher to ask about her experience with the class, thank her, and say good night. Just before leaving, she turned and said, "Oh, by the way, you should probably check the class bathroom. We had a few problems this morning."

She left, and I checked. The morning's "few problems" had grown to a tide of sewage. Second graders are not ecologically minded, as evidenced by their wanton use of toilet paper. Fortunately, there is an inch-high threshold leading to the bathroom, and the water had not yet crested that dike. Since the custodian is also a bus driver and it was only thirty minutes past closing, he was unavailable. Besides, I reminded myself, I am the principal. I should deal with all aspects of this school. But where does he keep that plunger?

Eventually, armed with the plunger, a mop and bucket, and knee-high barn boots, I waded in and stemmed the tide. When the regular second-grade teacher returned she never learned of the problem, for there was no evidence of my valiant efforts. But the custodian did ask if I knew why his barn boots were so filthy.

My assumption in the plumbing incident that "I should fix it because I am the principal" has been echoed several times since--increasingly by others, decreasingly by me. On one such occasion the cook blustered into my office, wringing her hands about the meat sauce and the noodles and water on the floor and that funny spitting noise and the meat is all thawed and the government



## THE RURAL AND SMALL SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP

says we can't refreeze it and we have all that surplus cheese to use somehow and it's already 9:15--and would I please fix it right away? It did not matter to her that my desk was littered with vertical files, computer printouts, adding machine tape, and budget requests. I went with her not because I understood the problem, but because she so obviously had one.

Actually, she had four. The steam pressure cooker was 1) not regulating itself, 2) getting threateningly hot, 3) leaking scalding water, and 4) making that funny spitting noise.

Initially Charlotte pleaded with me to "fix it before something happens. You're the principal; do something." Though the problems looked and sounded worse than they actually proved, I was not ready to correct them myself, and promised to call a repairman. That did not satisfy Charlotte. Since appealing to my principalship had failed, she shifted to challenging my gender. "You're a man; fix it!"

Contrary to Charlotte's assumptions, neither my profession nor my gender proves sufficient to solve all problems, especially when those problems stem from mechanical or other nonhuman sources. The mechanical problems are usually frustrating, never amusing at the time, and rarely fascinating. On the other hand, problems presented by nature are only occasionally frustrating, often amusing, and always fascinating.

Despite being a native Vermonter and having spent years hunting and fishing, I still find it singularly fulfilling to drive the 15 minutes to school and enjoy the beginning day. Blue jays cross the road in front of my car at the same place and time each day. Cows head out to pasture. And four times in two years I have stopped the car to watch deer forage.

### Herding a "Cow"

This may all sound rather idyllic, and it is--usually. But one spring morning a recess aide came to me to report that a cow was loose on school property. Since cows graze on adjacent meadows constantly, such trespass was not particularly noteworthy. But this aide was new, so I went with her as assurance.

The cow, however, proved to be a bull. And it was surrounded by 107 kindergarten through fourth graders, most of whom thought the whole scene quite funny. The bull obviously did not. I immediately herded the children back into the school and then set about herding the bull back to his pasture.

Not until after 45 futile minutes of alternate pursuit and flight on my part did several staff members, trying to stifle their laughter, enlighten me that one does not herd a bull--especially an irritated bull. While performing endless, inconclusive minuets with the bull, I actually considered brandishing my jacket like a matador's cape; to entice him through the gate. Fortunately for



my then unestablished public image, I rejected the temptation to play El Cordobés to imaginary "Olé!"s. Also, fortunately for me, when the seventh graders came out for physical education, the girl who owned the bull sauntered over, called his name, and guided him home. I thanked her, slung my cape over my shoulder, and tried to retire from the field of honor as inconspicuously as possible.

Not even my office is a haven from all of nature's challenges. On two occasions I have had to capture live bats. It is easiest when they are hanging upside down on a wall, asleep. Under those conditions the most effective method for me has been to use an empty coffee can with a replaceable lid. I simply tiptoe to the unsuspecting bat with the coffee can in one hand and the lid in the other. When I am close--but no closer than necessary--I thank God and my father for a 36-inch reach and slam the can over the bat, trapping it inside. As the rudely awakened creature flaps, claws, and hisses against the metal, I slide the can, still firmly against the wall, to the corner where I slip the plastic lid over the mouth of the can.

After two successful captures, I now perform this service with aplomb. But my success has proved unsettling to at least one teacher, who entered my office for conversation immediately after I had placed a coffee-canned bat in my wastebasket. As we talked, the bat periodically flapped and scratched. Ignoring the noise, I tried to concentrate on what the lady was saying. Though she became increasingly distracted, I refused to acknowledge that I heard anything. Just as the conversation ended and the teacher started to leave, the enraged bat knocked the can over. I then started to explain, but Mrs. Bailey did not remain past my opening words, "Well, it's a bat..."

### In Search of Teeth

A less threatening natural phenomenon had me on my hands and knees on the playground, searching for a first grader's two lost teeth. Searching, because they were the first teeth the child had lost, and she was heartbroken. My assurances that the Tooth Fairy was as omniscient as Santa Claus, and would know what had happened even without dental evidence, did nothing to stop Stacy's tears. But my assurance that I would find her teeth worked wonders. Stacy did not know that I caution staff members not to promise what they may not be able to deliver.

I felt a bit like an archaeologist must feel at a dig. I gently brushed sand and spread blades of grass. Five marbles, two algebra quizzes, a ring, and a chocolate chip cookie later, I found one of her teeth. One out of two was good enough for me, and I made such a show of returning it to her that one satisfied Stacy also.

Dealing with mechanical and natural disasters requires knowledge and action. Dealing with people usually requires the addition of diplomacy. During the past two years I have practiced personal diplomacy, self-defense diplomacy, and international diplomacy.

My personal diplomacy and tact are particularly tested when I counsel junior high students about sexuality. Eighth graders tend not to be as aware of or concerned about social propriety as adults, especially as it relates to "PDA"--the students' term for public display of affection. More than once I have tried to explain diplomatically and tactfully why entwined bodies and lunchtime do not mix appropriately with hot turkey sandwiches, peas, and chocolate pudding. I have tried to caution about painful consequences when two sets of braces lock in a kiss. The lovers may only become convinced that I have never been in love, but the diplomacy usually works--for a while.

One less humorous incident illustrates that even with people, knowledge and action may be all that work. Especially action.

### Disruptive Father

As is probably the case with most principals, I have had at least one student whose behavior has been repeatedly disruptive, anti-social, and occasionally dangerous. Our discipline system involves parents as much as they are able and willing to cooperate, but one father had bucked me and the system constantly. One morning, in response to what had become a series of discipline notices, this father roared into our school parking lot via the exit, screeched to a halt in the bus loading zone, and stomped into my office demanding to see me.

I gave him time to calm down by feigning a phone call, but when I finally bade good-bye to the receiver and rose to greet him, he only became more angry. I tried to interject reason and diplomacy between his epithets and threats of everything from lawsuits to my pending need for plastic surgery. Frustrated by his failure to persuade me of the justice of his cause, the man swung his fist at my face. He missed. Before he left the building I called the police to notify them that I had been publicly threatened with personal and property injury.

At the time, this seemed to me a case where diplomacy and reason had failed completely. The next time I saw the man, however, the first thing he did was apologize for his words and actions that day.

Diplomacy on a scale more familiar to Dr. Kissinger was expected of me last year on Halloween Party Day. In addition to supervising the planned extras of Halloween parties and upper-grade sports physicals, I was asked to host a group of female physicians from the People's Republic of China on the first such tour of the United States. These upper-echelon policy-makers were particularly interested in rural medical service delivery systems, and would be

in Vermont on Halloween. Since we had scheduled regional doctors, nurses, and interns for our school clinic that day, we were asked to serve as a whistlestop on the Chinese tour.

It was exhilarating and humbling to consider the political and historical significance of that visit. And except for temporary confusion and panic when we had a 50 percent power failure just one hour before their scheduled arrival, the day was a joy. We spoke through interpreters and smiled a lot. The doctors seemed as interested in our school system as in our medical services, and enjoyed themselves immensely during a visit to the first grade classroom.

### Explaining Bugs

The most difficult concept I discussed with these women had nothing to do with education or medicine. I tried vainly to explain why the children and even some teachers were dressed like Bugs Bunny, Casper the Friendly Ghost, Spider Man, Wonder Woman and Darth Vader. In lieu of resolving that cultural dilemma, we smiled even more, posed for pictures, thanked each other, and waved good-bye.

Within 15 minutes of their departure the business of our school day resumed. Athletes stripped to their underwear and stood on cold scales. Darth Vader and Wonder Woman worked on math at the computer. Sixth graders had a library period. And I sat in my office for a few minutes, marveling at the fascination of this job.

Sitting in my office now are two photographs that exemplify my feelings about being a principal. Though the technical and academic skills for this position come from School Finance 344, Curriculum Concepts and Development 377, and the like, the emotion comes from living it. That is the truest and most valuable training available.

One of those pictures is of five Chinese women and me. It is posed. We are dressed in our respective uniforms: suit and tie for me, blue smock-jackets and pants for the Chinese. The other photograph, also of me, is candid. I am surrounded by second graders. And in addition to my uniform I am sporting foot-tall, pink, construction paper bunny ears and whiskers.

The key to this job is that the man in both pictures is happy.

## Prologue

# The Principal and Research

The relationship between educational research and school practice is long and uneven. "Research says" and "Practice is" are opening words in sentences rarely joined. In the 1980's that picture has changed somewhat. Now, one occasionally finds researchers seriously studying practice, and practitioners both studying and applying research as well as doing research. Perhaps the twain can meet. This section contains a variety of perspectives on and examples of the principal and research.

Readers will note frequent reference to the body of writings known as the Effective Schools Literature. The emphasis is perhaps a result of the current high visibility of the research that has produced the literature as well as what some see as its high utility for school people. While there is no intent to endorse or reject the literature and its claims in this text, the editors submit that no other research literature would have been so frequently cited had they compiled a similar book of readings earlier during their careers. The acknowledgement of this literature by practitioners and academics suggests that the times for researchers and school people to work collaboratively may be a reality.

Carlson and Matthes take on one of the enduring and hard-to-solve issues of rural schools in "Teacher Recruitment and Retention." They present the results of their own research, dealing with question such as why teachers originally choose rural areas. They subsequently consider their conclusions in concert with recommendations for teacher development and retention coming from other researchers. Carlson and Matthes provide an example of university personnel working in and with lower school personnel to provide useful information and inform practice.

Kavina, in "An Rx for Motivating Professional & Staff," presents good arguments for keeping faculty growing in knowledge and skill and interested in development. The impact of his arguments is increased because what he proposes can be done with neither great expense nor inconvenience by most schools.

In "Reform Movement Mandates for Effective Schools," Clarke takes some of the conclusions reached in effective schools studies and attempts to apply them to rural schools. She contends that what these studies suggest have consistently been the goals of rural schools; namely, it does not

necessarily apply because the research was done in urban schools. Clarke's implicit response is that the conclusions reached are reasonable for all schools.

Corriveau, in his "Parent Involvement, Home Concern, and Student Achievement," exemplifies the practitioner studying and utilizing research-based knowledge. A principal himself, Corriveau provides readers with insightful comments on the research which touches upon the sociological processes at work in the school. Much interested in parental involvement in and impact on the schools, Corriveau provides commentary on the research that validates the importance of and impact upon schooling of home and community background and influences. He subsequently moves on to mastery learning and its impact on low-achieving students. Corriveau's paper shows a principal much concerned with analyzing available research and its impact on school practice. Traditional, campus-based researchers could scarcely ask for more apt utilization and analysis of their work by practitioners.

In "The Schools, the University, and Research: Toward Networking," Hood and Ducharme describe the process that has developed in Vermont over the past five years, a process producing a series of school and university collaborative actions culminating in the creation of a network between several rural superintendencies and the university. They point out how each needs the other in order to fulfill their missions effectively, how a shared focus can improve research and inform practice, and how fragile such vital organizations are.

Murphy and Hord, in "A Pathway to Instructional Improvement: Priming the Territory," establish the clear need for imagination, care, and clear information in improving instruction. The piece illustrates two things well: how a principal goes about promoting change with limited resources and how researchers, with the aid of the practitioners, can document the process and do research. Murphy and Hord also provide thorough analysis of the work accomplished.

Clarke, Sullivan, and Richardson, in "A Differentiated Supervision Program Applied in a Small School Setting," first accentuate the need for quality supervision in rural schools and, second, the difficulty in providing it. After presenting the case for informed supervision, the writers show how the model they propose was adapted and applied in the school in which one of the writers is principal. Clearly, here is an article which vividly describes the process of informing practice through action research and providing for growth and development in the program.

Taken together, the articles present a variety of activities with varying degrees of involvement for the participants. They suggest a future rich in collaboration and fruitful in positive results for children, parents, and educators. A decade from now, readers may see the activities and practices described in this section as primitive.

# Teacher Recruitment and Retention: A Rural School Need

by DR. ROBERT V. CARLSON, Professor of Education  
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Several studies<sup>1</sup> indicate that the recruitment and retention of teachers for rural school districts are major problems. Rural school administrators are challenged each school year to successfully recruit and retain teachers. School administrators with the greatest difficulty recruiting teachers represent schools and communities which are often characterized as:

- having small enrollments (often less than 300 students)
- having fewer than 2,500 inhabitants
- having limited school and community facilities
- being located some distance from major metropolitan areas
- tending to be insulated from societal trends or changes
- existing in a fishbowl environment

These schools represent 67% of all schools and enroll 33% of all school children. One quarter of all school districts in the United States enroll fewer than 300 students; these schools include more than half a million students and fifty thousand teachers. These numbers illustrate the potential magnitude of the teacher recruitment and retention problems facing rural schools.

The problem of teacher recruitment in rural areas is further complicated by teacher turnover. The major contributors to the turnover problem, according to the Small Schools Digest, are the following:

- Preservice preparation is presently more suitable for large, metropolitan schools than for small, rural schools
- Career orientations fail to recognize that experience in small schools advances future plans and goals
- Teachers often have inadequate experiential and psychological preparation for the demands and limitations of small schools and rural communities
- There is discontinuity between idyllic expectations and harsh realities
- Administrators of small school districts sometimes employ inappropriate and inadequate recruitment strategies<sup>2</sup>

Not only has the recruitment and retention of teachers been bothersome to rural areas but the future does not bode well either. Most population projections forecast a dramatic reversal of the past decade's steady decline of school age children. A dramatic rise in school enrollments is expected for the decade of the nineties. This enrollment increase, coupled with the apparent move back to rural areas, suggests that rural areas will absorb a significant number of new children. According to Education Week, rural areas have already experienced an increase in population from 53.6 million in 1970 to 59.5 million in 1980.<sup>3</sup> In fact, in a recent Gallup Poll, nearly half of Americans who live in or near cities "would move to places with 10,000 people or fewer if they had the chance..."<sup>4</sup> It is clear that rural areas are not going to be spared the impact of increased school enrollments and will face stiff competition from urban counterparts in the recruitment and retention of teachers.<sup>5</sup>

Rural schools, because of their limited financial resources, have not paid competitive salaries. According to a recent report of National Education Association, the eleven lowest paying states are: Mississippi, South Dakota, Maine, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Vermont, West Virginia, Louisiana, Idaho, and South Carolina. The national average for teacher salaries is \$23,546 while the average salary for these eleven, very rural states is \$18,715, ranging from \$15,971 to \$19,800.<sup>6</sup> The lagging salaries of rural professionals have contributed to recruitment and retention problems. As with most problems, there is a variety of solutions proffered by educational administrators and educational researchers. We will highlight some promising practices which served as a conceptual base for our teacher recruitment and retention study. A summary of suggested practices<sup>7</sup> follows:

### Recruitment Approaches

- Pay expenses of candidate to visit school district and moving expenses

## Teacher Recruitment and Retention: a Rural School Need

- Have present teachers in districts nominate prospective teachers
- Show willingness to hire spouse teams
- Provide assistance in locating housing and employment for spouse
- Emphasize local school autonomy
- Involve local community patrons and civic groups in recruitment efforts
- Provide an aggressive fringe benefit package that includes health benefit plan, supplemental retirement plan, dental plan, personal leave, life insurance, and financial support for graduate studies
- Stress special features--geography, climate, historical sites, cuisine, and isolation
- Emphasize the inherent advantages of small schools, but be honest about their limitations as well
- Seek individuals who resided in rural areas before and who are most likely to return
- Emphasize the quality of rural life and the availability of leisure activities

### Retention Approaches

- Preschool and ongoing orientation program
- Immediate community involvement in welcoming and including the new teacher in a variety of community programs
- Pairing new teacher with a master teacher
- Regular classroom and school wide visits by district and building administrators
- Involvement and opportunities to express inservice needs to school administrators
- Professional days to visit other schools and to participate in workshops and conferences

Some of these strategies require added financial resources; however, many represent more a set of values and life style than an increase in costs.

Whether any of these issues is related to the actual acceptance of teaching positions is unclear. Other questions facing rural school administrators include: For what reasons does one accept a teaching position in a rural school district rather than in a suburban or urban district? For what reasons would an individual accept a teaching position in another school district? It is assumed that school administrators, particularly those from rural school districts, need to better understand the reasons teachers accept positions and choose to remain. The remainder of this article examines these questions.



As part of a more extensive study,<sup>8</sup> a questionnaire, Teacher Recruitment and Preparation Questionnaire (TRPQ), was mailed during April, 1985 to individuals identified at the Universities of Iowa and Vermont as completing undergraduate programs in teacher education during the 1983-84 academic year. The section of the TRPQ pertinent to this article requested the respondents to rate the importance of forty-five reasons pertaining to the community, the schools, and benefits in accepting their present teaching position. The respondents were asked to rate each identified factor on a Likert-type scale from very positive influence to a very negative influence.

Of the 401 questionnaires mailed, forty-seven percent (N=188) were returned of which forty-two percent (N=170) were usable. Of the respondents, eighty-one percent (N=120) were female and nineteen percent (32) were male.<sup>9</sup> The proportion of male to female respondents not teaching was quite similar to those who were teaching. Of the respondents teaching, fifty percent (N=5) were teaching in elementary schools; thirty-five percent were teaching in secondary schools; five percent (N=5) were teaching in preschools; four percent (N=4) were teaching in K-12 settings; the remaining four percent (N=4) were in unclassified settings. Twenty-six percent of the respondents were teaching in suburban school districts; forty-three percent in urban school districts; and thirty percent in rural school districts. Of those teaching in rural school districts, thirty-three percent were males, while fifteen percent of those accepting teaching positions in suburban school districts and eleven percent of those teaching in urban school districts were males. The average reported salaries for those teaching in suburban schools was \$14,042; for those teaching in urban schools, \$14,004, and for those teaching in rural schools, \$12,221. These differences in salaries among urban, suburban, and rural school districts are already well documented in other studies, but an explanation for the disproportionate number of males accepting teaching positions in rural school districts is not available.

When comparing the reasons of the respondents from suburban, urban, and rural school districts for accepting their present teaching position, the differences are minor (Figure 1). In Figure 1, the three highest rated reasons for each cluster, community, the school, and salary/benefits, are presented. The differences in the cluster of salary/benefits, which consisted of eighteen items, are slight. Those accepting teaching positions in rural school districts considered other benefits more important than starting salary. Perhaps these respondents were more concerned about "settling in" to the community whereas their counterparts in urban and suburban settings seem to be more concerned about their "professional future." In the school cluster, which consisted of seventeen items, the respondents across types of school districts considered the school climate and support as important. This sense of support, no matter what the source, seems important. How this support is communicated to teachers is not clear, but its importance is documented by

FIVE HIGHEST RATED REASONS IN EACH CLUSTER  
FOR ACCEPTING PRESENT TEACHING POSITION BY TYPE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT

| Type of School District                                                                                               | Community                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | School                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Salary and Benefits                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RURAL:</b><br><br>Less than 2,500 in population or less than 1,000 persons per square mile for extended city areas | Community involvement opportunities<br><br>Relatively close to home<br><br>Traditional community and family values<br><br>Community commitment to quality education<br><br>School/community emphasis on student learning and achievement | Limited number of extra meetings<br><br>Support from the administration<br><br>Pleasant school climate (physical and social)<br><br>Helpful supervision<br><br>Support from parents/community                                                 | Paid expenses for and encouragement to attend workshops and conventions<br><br>Fringe benefit package, including health and life insurance, retirement, dental plan, and personal leave<br><br>Assistance in locating housing<br><br>Salary schedule that rewards<br><br>Assistance in locating job for spouse |
| <b>URBAN:</b><br><br>Greater than 2,500 population                                                                    | Community commitment to quality education<br><br>School/community emphasis on student learning and achievement<br><br>Adequate housing<br><br>Job opportunities for spouse<br><br>Social/cultural opportunities                          | Supportive colleagues<br><br>Pleasant school climate (physical and social)<br><br>Support from Administration<br><br>Reputation of school district<br><br>Access to resources (e.g., curriculum guides, space, equipment, films, books, etc.) | Fringe benefit package; including health and life insurance, retirement, dental plan, and personal leave<br><br>Starting salary<br><br>Paid expenses for and encouragement to attend workshops and conventions<br><br>Salary schedule that rewards<br><br>Tuition reimbursement for graduate courses           |
| <b>SUBURBAN:</b><br><br>Contiguous to urban area and greater than 2,500 population or 1,000 persons per square mile   | School/community emphasis on student learning and achievement<br><br>Relatively close to home<br><br>Traditional community and family values<br><br>Continuing education opportunities<br><br>Social/cultural opportunities              | Reputation of school district<br><br>Pleasant school climate (physical and social)<br><br>Supportive colleagues<br><br>Support from parents/community<br><br>Helpful supervision                                                              | Fringe benefit package, including health and life insurance, retirement, dental plan, and personal leave<br><br>Access to tenure after three years of teaching<br><br>Starting salary<br><br>Paid expenses for and encouragement to attend workshops and state conventions<br><br>Salary schedule that rewards |

figure 1

other studies and should receive special attention by administrators. One reason given by those teaching in urban and suburban school districts as important was the reputation of the school district. Again, how the respondents were able to determine the reputation of a school district is unclear. However, such a reason implies a concern for professional identity and fits the initial pattern identified in the cluster of salary/benefits. This is speculative at this time but certainly has implications for the image of rural school districts. With the increased concerns about the "professionalization" of teachers, rural school administrators need to examine how to improve their settings on this dimension, particularly if they wish to compete more effectively with urban and suburban school administrators in the recruitment and retention of classroom teachers who value a professional identity.

The difference in the ratings of the eighteen items in the community cluster support the hypothesis that those teaching in rural school districts value a sense of community and traditional social values. Teachers in urban/suburban settings were more concerned about continued personal and professional growth through cultural and continuing education opportunities. Administrators in rural school districts should examine more closely the common perceptions held in regard to cultural and continuing education opportunities. Rural school administrators should consider how to stress the cultural/continuing education opportunities for teachers which exist in their geographic area and how to improve upon this factor, if needed. The image of the pastoral setting with a cultural void is outdated and inaccurate. Cultural and educational opportunities come in many forms and should be publicized more extensively.

In addition to identifying reasons teachers accepted their present position, the TRPQ asked the respondents to identify the five most important reasons for which they would consider taking a teaching position in another district. The five most frequently chosen reasons for considering another teaching position by present type of school district (e.g., rural, urban, and suburban) are presented in Figure 2. Without a doubt, salary and fringe benefits are the major reasons for considering another position. Also, a sense of support continues to have an important influence when considering a teaching position or changing school systems. For teachers in rural settings, the support from parents and community is important, whereas those in urban or suburban settings saw the support from the administration as most important.

The implications of the recruitment and retention survey are compelling if administrators, no matter what the setting, want to attract and retain teachers. The salary and benefits must be competitive, but a sense of support and the presence of a pleasant school climate are also essential. These conditions are recognized in other professions but continue unmet in the public school sector which is largely dependent on tax monies for support. Yet school administrators are faced with the challenge of creating professional conditions

# MOST FREQUENTLY CITED REASONS TO CONSIDER ANOTHER TEACHING POSITION BY PRESENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

| Type of School District                                                                                               | Reasons                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RURAL:<br><br>Less than 2, 500 in population or less than<br>1,000 persons per square mile for extended<br>city areas | Starting salary<br><br>Pleasant school climate<br>(physical and social)<br><br>Access to resources (e.g., curriculum guides,<br>space, equipment, films, books, etc.)<br><br>Support from parents/community                                                          |
| URBAN:<br><br>Greater than 2,500 population                                                                           | Starting salary<br><br>Fringe benefit package, including health and<br>life insurance, retirement, dental plan, and<br>personal leave<br><br>Support from administration<br><br>Pleasant school climate<br>(physical and social)<br><br>Salary schedule that rewards |
| SUBURBAN:<br><br>Contiguous to urban area and greater than<br>2,500 population or 1,000 persons per<br>square mile    | Starting salary<br><br>Fringe benefit package, including health and<br>life insurance, retirement, dental plan, and<br>personal leave<br><br>Community commitment to quality education<br><br>Salary schedule that rewards<br><br>Support from administration        |

figure 2

in which teachers can find rewards and a professional identity. It is clear from our research and other studies that it is not enough to focus on effective methods for the recruitment of teachers, but administrators need to reward their teachers and create conditions for professional growth.

In a parallel study, a classroom teacher from a rural elementary school who, when queried about the reasons her particular school appeared to be very effective in introducing a number of changes and had a reputation as a school in which other teachers wish to teach, stated, "We feel as though we are professionals and the board of education and administrators treat us that way." Over a period of five years the school board and administration of this school system had introduced, in consultation with teachers, a number of policy changes which included:

- reimbursement of tuition for one graduate course per academic year
- release time for working on curriculum, units of instruction, or to visit other classrooms or school districts
- inservice workshops designed and arranged by classroom teachers with administrative support and involvement
- effective negotiations with area university to offer in the district graduate level courses which tied in with local curricular and instructional projects
- hiring of teachers during the summer to attend summer institutes and to work on curriculum development projects
- participation in a regional network of teachers, administrators, and school board members who have sponsored several conferences on outcome based learning<sup>10</sup>

These pursuits emerged over time and presently are being fully supported by the principal stakeholders including classroom teachers in a rural school district. The commitment and professionalism are not of theory but of practice and have been attained by ordinary people in recognizing the importance of creating an environment for supporting teachers in becoming more effective in their teaching. This is a worthy goal for all school systems, but it is a must for rural school systems if they are to be successful in obtaining and retaining their most valuable resource--their classroom teachers.

NOTES:

1. See Gerald D. Bailey and Robert E. Scott, "Issues and Answers in the Rural and Small Education Movement," report presented at the Annual

- Rural Education Conference (Nov., 1980), ERIC Document ED212448, 114 p.; Bruce O. Barker et al., "A Report on Rural Education in Arkansas," (July, 1983), ERIC Document ED231583, 17 p.; and Ivan D. Muse et al., "Rural Education in Colorado: Recent Research Findings," (June, 1983), ERIC Document ED231573, p. 17.
2. "Finding and Keeping Teachers: Strategies for Small Schools." (1984). Small Schools Digest. ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.
  3. Education Week, November 2, 1983.
  4. Reported in New York Times, March 24, 1985.
  5. As recently reported in the New York Times, (August 11, 1985), New York City is facing a shortage of 4,200 teachers for this coming September opening of schools. They attribute this shortfall to several factors including rising enrollment, a new class size policy, mandated special education, dropout prevention and other special programs, and early retirements.
  6. National Education Association. (1985). "Estimates of School Statistics, 1984-1985," Spring.
  7. See for example Dale Carmichael, "The Challenge of Rural Education," Rural Educator 4 (Fall, 1982), pp. 5-10; Edward H. Seifert et al., "Personnel Practices in Small Schools," Small School Forum 4 (Fall, 1982), pp. 1012; Doris I. Helge, and Lawrence W. Marrs, "Personnel Recruitment and Retention in Rural America; A Growing Problem," Pointer 26 (Winter, 1982) pp. 28-33; Charles Reavis and Shamus Mehaffie, "Staff Recruitment and Inservice Development in Smaller Schools," NASSP Bulletin 64 (October, 1980), pp. 32-35; and Edward H. Seifert and William H. Kurtz, Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Smaller Schools. A Handbook for Superintendents and School Boards. San Marcos, Texas: Small Schools Resource Center, Southwest Texas State University. June 1983, p. 17.
  8. Other portions of this study have been reported at the Rural Education Association (REA) Annual Conference scheduled for October, 1985 or will be reported at the American Education Research Association Conference scheduled for April, 1986.
  9. Totals on individual items will vary in that some respondents did not respond to every item.
  10. Carlson, R.V. (May, 1985). A Case Study of the Implementation Process or How a Rural Elementary School Makes a Difference. Burlington: University of Vermont, Center for Evaluation and Policy Research.

# An Rx for Motivating Staff

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Motivating professional staff and securing an ongoing continuous commitment from them are tasks that usually receive a high priority from practicing administrators. These task areas have received considerable study, yet some hesitancy remains about how to proceed. This article will:

- summarize several underpinnings of motivation techniques.
- suggest that failure of motivation is often due to an incomplete use of knowledge about motivation and a tentative use of authority by administrators.
- identify and describe managerial techniques used to stimulate motivation and secure followership.

## The Background

Securing a commitment of best efforts from staff and maintaining this effort at a high level has always been a necessary skill for administrators. Over the years, different management philosophies have resulted in varying methods to achieve staff motivation. During the scientific era in the history of management, securing optimum commitment from employees occurred through techniques of management control, time and motion analyses, and matching best skill with best person for the task.<sup>1</sup> Somewhat later, Barnard developed the notion that in a free society where man could choose his place of employment, man worked for incentives.<sup>2</sup> His theory of incentives had been transposed by many into a workplace list of factors that could "turn on" staff. The administrator who wished to motivate the staff had merely to translate the factors into managerial behaviors. For example, one of Barnard's incentives, designed to induce contributions from workers, was called "ideal benefactions."

This incentive dealt with pride of workmanship. Contemporary administrators, utilizing this incentive to motivate staff, called the staff member's attention to good work, recognized the good work and complimented the staff member. Such management behaviors motivated the employee to continued or better efforts.

Still later, Herzberg developed the concept that many management experts felt best clarified what made an employee satisfied or dissatisfied in his/her job. Herzberg stated that two sets of conditions affected individuals at work: motivators and hygiene factors.<sup>3</sup> The motivators were positive, with the power to satisfy an employee. These were achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility and advancement. The second set of factors was hygiene factors and could dissatisfy or demotivate. Examples of hygiene factors were company policy, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions. In the long run, according to Herzberg, what did motivate people was the challenge and pleasure they obtained from the work itself, the sense of achievement, recognition, feeling of responsibility and the desire for advancement. Motivators could be translated into managerial behaviors, thus being very prescriptive for increasing the degree of motivation. For example, the administrator cognizant of the five motivators would notice a staff member's good work (achievement); officially recognize the worker's efforts (recognition); continue to keep the staff member's job relevant (the work itself); delegate meaningful responsibility to the staff member (responsibility); and promote good efforts by staff through merit, title or whatever means were available in the system (advancement).

Parallel to the development of thoughts on motivation have been the conceptualizations of supervision and supervisory behavior. Blake and Mouton formulated a managerial grid that focused on two basic dimensions: concern for production and concern for people.<sup>4</sup> From these basic dimensions five possible ways for an administrator to behave emerged. The idealized supervisory behavior was that which achieved task accomplishment from committed people while maintaining a high level of trust and respect from the staff. Thus, an ideal administrator moves the organization to a high level of task accomplishment; perhaps by being expert at clarifying goals and successfully sustaining high efforts from people while simultaneously showing great humanism and consideration for staff.

Still other conceptualizations of supervision and supervisory behavior have detailed the effect of the work situation on leadership; that is, how the type of organizational structure, philosophy, and purpose of the unit were proposed to affect supervision. These contingency models suggested that work situations differed and required varying types of supervisory behavior. Fiedler believed that, in addition to administrator task-oriented behavior, situations often required one supervisory emphasis rather than another.<sup>5</sup> For instance, a highly bureaucratized school system may have called for an



administrator to go "by the book" to achieve success in this type of contingency (situation).

Studies of organizational climate, though larger in scope than specific motivational techniques, also provided clues to administrators. The effect of the organization, its policies, procedures and its styles of leadership by administrators upon employees, strongly suggested to management what needed to be done to secure maximum motivation.<sup>6</sup> The "structure" of the workplace and the way the leader "behaved" could no longer be ignored.

Currently, analyses of organizations noted for excellence have revealed certain common denominators, some of which deal with motivation. One of the common denominators of excellence accounted for greater productivity through managerial respect for the staff.<sup>7</sup> Greater productivity was achieved through continuous attention to such managerial acts as giving consideration to staff and opportunities for ego enhancement.

### New Realizations About Administrative Authority

While conceptualizations about motivation and supervision were useful, logically suggesting to administrators effective strategies for achieving high motivation, these studies were not a complete picture of organizational life. While exhorting administrators to learn how to "turn on" staff, the emphasis on "consideration" often neglected the "command" aspect inherent in all positions of management. In other words, much attention was given to the carrot in the carrot-and-stick analogy and not enough to the stick. While the carrot was integral in motivation, the stick should have been no less so, but it had become fashionable to concentrate upon the carrot. Motivating people with both the carrot and the stick, however, were well grounded in the works of Skinner, Barnard, and Herzberg as well as others.<sup>8</sup>

Today, we again recognize that the administrators have certain badges of status and power. They have the power to reward but also to punish; the power to approve but also to disapprove; the power to assist or ignore; the power to promote or pass over. We are reminded that the power vested in administrators is there for a reason: to be used. Authority, as well as persuasion, is necessary in management.

### The Prescription

Securing and retaining a high level of motivation with professional staff is largely a result of administrative behavior. Armed with a knowledge of motivational theories and a full appreciation of the responsibility and authority inherent in the management role, administrators can secure maximum

motivation. Based on the studies mentioned, and the realization that management's responsibility and use of authority is crucial in motivation, a list of critical factors in motivation matched by accompanying administrative behaviors follows. Practicing these behaviors may well result in a more productive organizational climate.

| Motivational Factors         | Administrative Behaviors                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Pride in Work             | 1. The administrator calls attention to good work and notes the staff member's responsibility for the good work.                                        |
| 2. Prestige                  | 2. The administrator demonstrates feelings about the importance of all the jobs under his authority.                                                    |
| 3. Enlarged participation    | 3. The administrator gives ownership of the educational program to the staff by seeking their input.                                                    |
| 4. Desirable work conditions | 4. The administrator secures optimum workplace conditions for his staff. These include physical and psychological.                                      |
| 5. Achievement               | 5. The administrator realizes each individual's need for achievement thus incorporating this need into the administrator-staff evaluative relationship. |
| 6. Recognition               | 6. The administrator knows that each individual is unique and wants to be acknowledged as such.                                                         |
| 7. Advancement               | 7. The administrator recognizes the need for ego enhancement in all and promotes the staff before the eyes of others in the organization.               |
| 8. Consideration             | 8. The administrator expresses friendship to staff.                                                                                                     |
| 9. Task accomplishment       | 9. The administrator, realizing that the purpose of the organization is task accomplishment, provides direction and facilitation.                       |
| 10. Command                  | 10. The administrator understands responsibility, is not embarrassed to use authority, and does act.                                                    |

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# Reform Movement Mandates for Effective Schools

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Within the last few years, the demand for more accountability and excellence in education and the increased attention to research on effective schools have resulted in mandated or suggested guidelines for excellence by state legislatures and departments of education throughout the country. The rural school principal cannot ignore these reform movement mandates, although some critics of such external pressures cite size and location of rural schools as a factor for non-compliance. Dr. Anne Campbell reported that the consequences of such mandates "...fall indiscriminately on school districts," and that "...some mandates make it difficult for rural schools to respond and 'necessarily small' schools are particularly affected because of their geographic isolation and size-limited resources." (Campbell, 1985, p. 2)

The components of school excellence, set forth in the literature on effective schools, are attainable for all schools, whether rural or urban. Geographic isolation and size-limited resources are not major factors in the pursuit of excellence in education. Research clearly demonstrates that the components of excellence are the same for all schools and those components are for the most part not economically or geographically based; rather, they focus on staff behaviors, leadership, climate, standards and expectations, community and parental involvement and the quality of instructional time. This paper will review the components of effective schools and their implications for the rural school principal.

In the debate over the strengths and weaknesses of rural schools, a frequently listed problem is inadequate curriculum. It is in this area that rural schools often find themselves most vulnerable when compared with urban schools. However, research consistently shows that effective schools place a high priority on basic skills; and rural schools have been doing just that since their inception. Multifaceted curricula do not necessarily assure excellence; a less complex curriculum may promote progress in basic skills.

Curriculum and instruction in effective schools focus on achievement of specific, clearly defined and generally agreed upon objectives. The curriculum has scope and sequence to insure continuity of instruction across grades; the objectives are articulated so that both students and teachers know where they are headed and how far they have progressed. Most research (Edmonds, Lezotte, 1985) on effective schooling demonstrates that the instructional objectives guide the program and that testing and evaluation are given serious attention. The principal, as instructional leader, must therefore give deliberate attention to the supervision of curriculum and instruction and take an active role in performing that responsibility.

Standards and expectations are critical to excellence in education. The principal must be fully aware that standards and expectations for effective schools do not refer exclusively to the minimum standards established for grade promotion, graduation or accreditation standards set by state departments of education. Rather, they also address a standard of mastery expected of all students, although some may exceed the minimum more than others. They also include a set of teacher behaviors which establish expectations for all children to achieve those minimum standards. The most consistent finding in studies on school effectiveness is the correlation between teacher expectations and achievement. Study after study reinforces the fact that students live up to the expectation set for them (Shoemaker and Fraser, 1981). Other research (Lezzote, 1981) indicates that the distinguishing feature of effective schools is found in staff perceptions of the learning potential of students. According to Lezotte, staff in effective schools believe that all children can learn what is expected of them; and without such beliefs, teachers direct efforts more toward custodial outcomes than learning outcomes. Therefore, principals of rural schools should set the standards, be consistent in applying them and seek out and employ teachers with high expectations of themselves and their students.

Time is a critical element in any process seeking to assure excellence. Time, in effective school research, is a resource. Whether one attempts to define time as "academic learning time" (Denham and Lieberman, 1980), "direct instruction" (Rosenshine, 1978) or "academic engaged time" (Rosenshine and Berliner, 1978), most researchers agree that effective use of instructional time and the amount and intensity of student/teacher engagement in learning activities are critical to achievement. Effective schools place a high priority on time-on-task activities. Principals, in their supervision to teachers, should give close attention to such factors as time-on-tasks and quality of supervision as parts of the supervision and evaluation process.

The rural teacher is the key to the quality of rural education. Although the research indicates that there is a consensus regarding the need for "better" teachers in rural areas, "better" often means teachers who can work more effectively in the rural areas, rather than the conventional assumption of more highly trained credentialed teachers (Sher, 1981).

Research on effective schools, however, indicates that, where higher teaching degrees often correlate with better student performance, there is also evidence to support that ongoing involvement in in-service training and engagement in expertise-enhancing activities are more important than formal degrees (ERS, 1983). Rural school principals should, therefore, make every effort to provide opportunities for staff development, based on teacher needs, rather than on the superficial assumptions of what the administration thinks teachers need.

In all studies on effective schools, school climate has been found to be one of the most distinguishing characteristics. Effective schools research (Lezotte, 1981) associates effective school climate with learning goals, students' engagement in academic tasks, and a business-like atmosphere. School climate implies the educational environment of the entire school which can enhance or impede student learning. Effective schools (Shoemaker, Fraser, 1981) are consistently orderly, peaceful and purposeful with rules and regulations, policies and guidelines which teachers and students are expected to know and students are expected to observe. In effective schools, principals assume the leadership role in establishing the school climate, and they administer the policies and guidelines of the school consistently, fairly and firmly.

Finally, effective schools are also schools where parents are an integral part of the educational process. Austin (1981) maintains that in such schools parents feel they are partners with school administrators and educators in educating their children. All school principals spend a considerable amount of time in school public relations activities. Rural school principals have a decided advantage in their "ruralness" in that the principal is not only very visible within the community but is also well-known. The school is often the center of the community. Opportunities for parental involvement and community input are readily available to the principal who welcomes and solicits such involvement.

In 1980, the Journalism Research Fellows Report published findings of effective rural schools. The findings of that report serve to underscore research on effective schools and the thoughts expressed by this writer. Among the characteristics listed were:

- rural school issues were community issues
- rural school curriculum, while emphasizing the academics, provided skills, attitudes and understanding of the real world
- rural schools maintained order and a strict discipline code
- rural schools tended to live in and be a part of the community

## THE RURAL AND SMALL SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP

- rural schools provided on-going staff development and growth
- rural school climate was conducive to learning
- rural school teachers maintained high expectations for learning

### Conclusion

For the principal of the small, rural school, the demand for educational excellence should be welcome. The components of excellence for effective schools have, for the most part, always been the components of rural schools: high standards and expectations, parental involvement, a climate conducive to learning with a strong basic skills curriculum. The principal, however, is central to the delivery of excellence. Effective schools are developed, and the components of excellence, common in such schools, cannot and will not be achieved without the active, creative, assertive leadership of the school principal.

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# Parent Involvement, Home Concern, and Student Achievement

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Amid the cries for school reform in the 1980's, a few voices have caught my attention since they offer qualitative assessments and practical prescriptions for the improvement of American secondary education. From an historical perspective, recent reform efforts to improve educational opportunity and equity in schools will fail unless policy makers address the macro issues of structured domination, the goals of schooling, home-school collaboration, the affective development of students and the perceptions of fairness.

This paper will explore these factors and suggest ways in which desired outcomes of schooling can be achieved by all students. A review of research about parent involvement and support and the home environment as contributors to the affective and cognitive development of students also follows. Emerging from the research on the schooling process is an answer to the question of equity in schools. This new line of research is promising since it does not predict the performance of children based solely on socioeconomic status (SES). I will refer to ways in which all parents can significantly influence the classroom success of their children, while proposing that a school's success (effectiveness) is determined in large part by its underlying structure of norms, expectations, and beliefs.

Schools are, indeed, social systems possessing a culture like the larger society in which they are rooted. Some schools recently designated as effective--they meet their stated goals and objectives--have a special climate or norm behavior cycles fostering excellence for their students. These schools have been studied and their unique characteristics synthesized by researchers (Austin, 1979). The implications of their research are interesting since they suggest that the home is still considered a powerful determinant of a student's educational development. However, as a review of the research will show, the emphasis has shifted away from what parents are to what parents do in the home to support their child's education.

With the effective school movement well underway with good results, educators have invested time and money to get parents involved in their schools. Unfortunately, few have been successful in identifying the types of participation which might be helpful or harmful. Some parent involvement programs have included parents as tutors of their children, parents as employees in the schools, and parents as decision makers and advisors to school personnel (O'Keefe, 1979; Brookover et al., 1982). Public opinion polls have suggested that parents want schools to tell them what they could do at home to help their children (Gallup, 1971). Many involvement programs simply counteract forces that are pulling families away from schools, e.g., the demise of the neighborhood school and centralization. The inadequate child care in homes with working parents has caused the child to be further alienated. The question for research remains; how do schools involve parents in ways which will promote the affective and cognitive growth in their children? This home question is probably the most researched factor in individual educational development (White, 1975; Zajonc, 1977; Majoribanks, 1974; Clausen, 1966; Boocock, 1972; Dolan, 1980). Several investigators (Bloom, 1964; Walberg and Majoribanks, 1976) have found that various characteristics of the home environment contribute more strongly to the prediction of children's abilities than social status or family structure. The degree and quality of parent-child interaction around a common activity have been seen as critical determinants of the affective growth of students (Levenstein, 1974).

Educators and sociologists have studied the impact of the home in influencing the educational development of children. According to some researchers, formal educational practices (or schooling) only partially explain the variations in students' academic achievement. They tell us that the school is limited due to genetic, sociological and economic forces operating in society. Others tell us that schools do not acquire the full motivation and energies in the learning process. Some researchers have found that home environment of children (socioeconomic status, race, occupation, and education of parents) accounts for much of the variation in school achievement (Karabel and Halsey, 1977).

Poverty, poor health and inadequate general knowledge remain problems in relation to the education of less advantaged children. Himmelweit and Whitfield (1949) found a high correlation between social class as determined by occupation, and intelligence as measured by a verbal test given to army recruits. School teachers were the highest class in measured intelligence, and the laborers occupied the bottom class. I would assume a higher correlation between class and measured intelligence since intelligence tests are still used as selection criteria for education. Havighurst and Levine's (1977) study confirms this point--higher social class kids have higher intelligence test scores than lower social class children who have lower intelligence ratings.

English data cited by Furneaux (1961) and Willis (1979) indicate a strong correlation between a father's occupation level and the child's academic success. Both authors attribute this to the greater willingness of both parents and children in the top groups to pursue educational goals.

The cultural level of the home has also been identified as an influence on academic achievement. Studying secondary school students, Campbell (1951) looked at music and hobbies in the home, the kinds of literature and radio programs received, the presence of pictures, parent attitudes, and attendance at cultural events. He found that all of these variables affected success in school, and that higher achievers came from homes having greater cultural exposure. Looking at French homes, Bourdieu (1973) used theatre, concert and museum attendance or the cultural capital of families to conclude that the education system reproduces the structures of dominance, and that the distribution of cultural capital is directly related to linguistic and cultural competence. If one believes these findings, it might be possible to identify which cultural variable caused such an effect and then apply it to the culturally disadvantaged. Arvidson's (1956) findings supported Campbell's thesis, especially for English courses at the secondary level; social, economic and cultural aspects of the home affected arithmetic achievement less. The variance in arithmetic was related to intelligence, school, home conditions, and teacher ability.

Coleman (1966) found that school environmental factors did not account for differential school achievement. Halsey and Gardner (1953) compared English middle and working class grammar school boys, finding that middle class boys tended towards higher achievement with the lower achievement of working class boys apparently related to their parents having lower educational aspirations for them and being inclined to exert less pressure for school performance. This effect was more pronounced in larger families.

Cultural standards, opportunities for verbal and literal stimulation and interaction, and language style are all clearly associated with social class. Studies by Bernstein (1973) suggest that differences in linguistic codes account for differences in educational development among children.

There have been other researchers who see the important determinant of school achievement not as family background (SES), but what adults actually do in their interactions with the children. We need, therefore, to look at which home environment processes affect children's learning.

Most studies of education as an agent of socialization indicate that the ability of a school to change a child's personality, values, and expectations is severely limited because these attributes are developed early, both in the home and, to a lesser extent, in such socializing agencies as schools (Bloom, 1964). Children's responsiveness to different types of instruction seems strongly influenced by the traits developed within the family. Thus, it would seem, schools are probably more effective when they attempt to complement and

reinforce rather than oppose the socialization process of the home. The implications can be profound.

Kahl (1953) found parental aspiration to be a more crucial factor than social class in explaining differential academic achievement of children. Children appear to assume the role expectations their parents encourage and work and study accordingly, either to "getting ahead" or "getting by." Everyday conversation or the mode of language of the home has also been identified as a major determinant of a child's intellectual growth since it can lead to the development of learning and thinking skills needed for academic success. Studying social class and linguistic development, Bernstein (1973) offered a sociolinguistic thesis of integrated analysis of the structure and process of social class reproduction. Social structure is seen primarily as a system of class inequality. Bernstein (1973) also found that the language of middle-class families approximated the language used in schools, thus explaining why English working-class students were lower achievers. A student learned according to his language structures--social interaction, verbal behavior, learning process, and social behavior. His work suggests that a student's linguistic deficiency leads to impulsive, shortsighted and unstructured problem solving. Writing in the mid-sixties, Bloom (1964) viewed what parents do rather than what they are as determinants for the learning achievement and intelligence of their children.

Educators frequently picture the school as less an agent for social mobility than as an institution that preserves, transmits, and reinforces intergenerational social status (Bowles, 1971; Bowles and Gintis, 1972; Larabel, 1972; Halsey, 1977). Education today is confronted by a situation in which mobility is seen as based on initial social advantages rooted in the family. The implication is clear that we must not ignore home environmental factors.

As Bloom, et. al., (1965, 1984) point out, improving home environmental factors is likely to be one of the most effective ways of improving children's school achievement, certainly for disadvantaged families and probably some middle-class families as well. The limited success of Project Head Start and the Bilingual and Bicultural Education programs can be explained in part by their neglect of the home environment (Fantini and Weinstein, 1968). In working with parents, we need to suggest specific ways in which home environment and parental behaviors can affect student achievement. Brookover, et. al., (1982) list five specific parent behaviors:

- Encourage and expect high performance from your child for school work
- Show interest in what your child does each day in the classroom
- Provide proper condition for home study such as
  - definite study time
  - quiet and non-disruptive conditions

- Limit time spent watching TV
- Provide supervision to ensure that your child receives adequate rest, nutrition and physical exercise

The importance of altering the home environment and educating parents to teach their children was supported by Brookover, et. al., (1982, p.275) when they wrote that parents represent a "potentially powerful force for improving student achievement," and that this has been "conspicuously absent from the educational scene." In defining parent support, Brookover (1982, p. 265) referred to it as "any means by which parent actions or attitudes reinforce the academic program of the school at home." Parent involvement efforts, according to Brookover, "should facilitate the teaching-learning process, first and foremost" (1982, p. 268). And as Bloom (1978, p. 571) has stated, "No teacher can provide the supplementary help needed by each student--other allies are needed."

The results of educators promoting a home learning climate have been proven to increase standardized achievement and student mental health or self-concept (Bloom, 1978). To Bloom (1984, p. 9) the home environment is an alterable variable that is "almost as effective as mastery learning procedures." One of Bloom's doctoral students studied "The Affective Correlates of Home Concern and Support, Instructional Quality, and Achievement" and concluded that future analyses were needed to "communicate to policy makers the need to study affective characteristics when contemplating the relative costs of instructional strategies and home education efforts" (Dolan, 1980).

I endorse the mastery learning process because I have observed many low-achieving students experience success. I believe this is the goal of our schools--to make all children educational winners; not the legitimization of social stratification. Mastery learning, if implemented in our schools, can lessen inequalities for lower-tracked students and weaken the century-old structures of dominance. Our teaching and testing practices have served as criteria for classification and placement, and lowered teacher expectations have prevented equal student access to resources for far too long--"misclassification tells a child he is deficient, the injury to self-esteem is incalculable," (Turnball and Turnball, 1978, pp. 86-87). As Bourdieu (1973) has suggested, tests only measure what those in power know; and for the French middle class this meant their own curriculum.

The older studies of parent status and home environment have demonstrated that learning in school related directly to the education and occupation of parents (SES), membership in ethnic groups, and race. To Bloom (1968) these are nonalterable variables that we need to know but best forget lamenting since we cannot change them.

Recent studies emphasize what parents do in interacting with their children. The development of language skills, encouragement, provisions for

help, organizing time and space in the home all correlate positively to school achievement. Language development and the ability and motivation to learn are influenced greatly by the home. If the home and school have divergent approaches, a child will be severely penalized by the school. Combined with mastery learning, parent involvement can powerfully change the way students and parents view themselves and their schools. All parents, regardless of SES, ethnicity, or race, share a strong common desire: success for their children (Brookover, et al, 1982, p. 275).

Bloom's (1968, p. 10) promising words provide us common ground upon which to begin our quest for a community of commitment:

...Modern society requires continual learning throughout life. If the schools do not promote adequate learning and reassurance of progress, the student must come to reject learning--both in the school and later life. Mastery learning can give zest to school learning and can develop a lifelong interest in learning. It is this continual learning which should be the major goal of the educational system.

It now becomes our task to reformulate our purposes, motivate, and capture the energies of teachers and parents who must effect these improvements. Prophetically, it seems, Ernest Boyer (1984) in his acclaimed study, High School, calls for parent-teacher-student advisory councils to address what Brookover, et al., (1982, P. 264) refer to as the "first order of business of the school...the teaching for high achievement for all students." What remains to be done is to communicate clearly to parents how they can assist in raising their child's achievement, and a good place to begin is by proudly explaining the promises of mastery learning to everyone. In our pluralistic society, to do less offers us only confrontation without consensus.

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# The Schools, the University, and Research: Towards Networking

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## Introduction

This article describes the research and practice perspective of ten rural Vermont school districts. The ten districts, called the Northeastern Vermont Mastery Learning/Outcome-Based Network, use research-derived information to develop instructional programs. They agree that their schools must be "research driven," a belief reflected in their statements of purpose and daily activities. The districts demonstrate how rural schools can improve through the better use of research, how schools and higher education can effectively collaborate, and how other schools might utilize similar strategies. Although the writers allude to the Effective Schools Research, the focus is not about that research, but about a process through which school districts and a university can use and develop research.

## District Background

The member districts are in four of Vermont's most northern and rural counties: Grand Isle, Franklin, Lamoille, and Orleans. One district--Milton--is in Chittenden County, the most populated county in Vermont. Milton's demographics and cultural heritage are similar to those of the districts in the four more northern and rural counties, unlike much of the rest of Chittenden County.

In addition to a large white, Anglo-Saxon population, the four-county region and Milton contain a Franco-American population and share strong

rural, small-town traditions. People celebrate these traditions through such events as covered dish suppers, parades, homecoming days, and Franco-American cultural activities. These events underscore the importance of family, community and heritage.

Franklin County also has a significant Native American population, the Abnackie Indians, who like other Native American groups, are struggling to maintain their identity. The region, while having its own unique ethnic population mix, reflects much of the rest of the nation in its variety.

During the past ten years increasing numbers of people have moved into the region; these individuals have more urban and suburban orientations than the long-term residents. Unevenly distributed throughout the region, they live in communities adjoining major highways or adjacent to recreational areas such as Lake Champlain or the major ski area in the region. Rarely constituting more than 20% of any given community's population, they are professionals (lawyers, artists, and educators) or businesspeople (local high tech employees and allied service providers).

Small businesses, such as stores, restaurants, gasoline stations, farms and organizations requiring unskilled labor are the main employers and they traditionally pay low wages. The more professionally oriented residents commute from Grand Isle and Franklin Counties to southern Chittenden County, a high tech center; in the Lamoille and Orleans counties, to Montpelier, the state capital. The latter groups are usually employed by state government, lobbying groups, or insurance companies. The total area is dependent on state aid and local taxes to support their schools. Vermont, on the average, supplies about 30% of local school budget with the remainder, as much as 70%, coming from local school taxes.

The Network school superintendencies, with the exception of Milton, are part of administrative units called supervisory unions of several towns that collectively support a superintendent of schools office. Member towns are legally autonomous; their sole collective responsibilities are the hiring of a superintendent and the maintaining of financial support of that office. Each member town has its own school board for its elementary school(s). Supervisory unions are complex entities held together through a supervisory union board; the size of the board may number as many as thirty, making central administrative oversight of the member schools difficult.

The schools are varied. Some Network districts have high schools and some do not; those having neither a high school nor membership in a regional high school must tuition their students elsewhere in the region.

Staffing help for the superintendent varies from a secretary, a special education coordinator and a Chapter I coordinator to a business manager and an assistant superintendent for instruction. Whatever the support available, the superintendencies are marginally staffed, making educational leadership difficult.

The schools vary considerably in size, being as large as one thousand pupils and as small as fifty. Principals of the schools might have nearly total responsibility for educational leadership or, in some cases, none at all. The latter condition may prevail in very small schools where teaching takes up most of the principals' time.

Teaching staffs range in number, academic preparation, and place of origin. Some superintendencies have approximately one hundred teachers while others have over two hundred. Teacher longevity varies from community to community. District staffs come from a variety of higher education institutions. In some cases, the majority graduated from Vermont colleges but in recent years more teachers have come from outside of Vermont. Teacher professional characteristics, years of service, and degrees are similar to those in other rural Vermont superintendencies.

### Building the Network

In 1980, the College of Education and Social Services of the University of Vermont (CESS) introduced a School Improvement Institute (SII). The first SII, held in the summer of 1980 on the University campus, provided teams of educators from five Vermont superintendencies with a background in the Effective Schools research. Ron Edmonds, one of the original Effective Schools researchers, came to Vermont and worked with personnel from the superintendencies, as did representatives from the Connecticut Department of Education; they presented information on their process for collecting information on school effectiveness. One of the districts, the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union, agreed to collect information upon return to the community. During the fall of 1980 and the spring of 1981, SII held additional sessions, opening them up to other interested districts.

In the fall, 1980, CESS initiated a program called the Interactive Leadership Program (ILP), designed for people currently in leadership roles. Supported by federal funds, the program emphasized leadership development and combined course work in development and special education. Several of the early participants came from two of the Franklin county superintendencies, the Franklin Northeast and Franklin Northwest. These individuals were further exposed to the Effective Schools Research as part of the program. ILP participants had to develop a home school-based team project. The projects used approaches and techniques common to the Effective Schools Research to analyze and solve local problem. SII and ILP, two university-initiated efforts, were directly having a double impact on local school personnel.

In 1980, the CESS established a new position, Assistant Dean for Outreach. As one of his early activities, the Assistant Dean met with leaders from the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union and developed a mastery

learning based course in curriculum development. Held in the summer of 1981, the course involved three instructors and twenty students, who were all staff members of the district. Although the results were mixed, the district leadership continued to explore the collaborative possibilities with the university.

At about the same time, the CESS launched two other projects: a graduate program located in Orleans Southwest to serve the region and another in the Franklin Central to serve contiguous districts. The first course in both areas was a new course on Effective Instruction developed by CESS faculty. Over forty people from the four superintendencies took the course at one of the four locations. This period also saw the introduction of the word "Network" into group meetings. Suddenly, in a very informal way, a structure emerged. Common interests and activities had formed a union. Thus the Northeastern Vermont Mastery Learning/Outcome-based Network was born.

In the summer of 1981, the SII hosted Bruce Joyce who focused on the research on best practices in inservice. Joyce also presented in the Interactive Leadership Program; once again cross-program and school district collaboration occurred.

Other administrators joined the program. They began to view student performance from the perspectives of the Effective Schools Research. Interest in the connection between social class and student performance developed; schools were interested in breaking negative correlations. Equity emerged as a major concern. This was an important value and perceptual shift for most communities.

Several CESS faculty and public school administrators learned of the Johnson City, New York, School System. The description of this district fit the emerging need in the four districts which were becoming increasingly interested in "equal educational opportunity." Johnson City had begun to build effective inservice programs and, at the same time, enhance the education of low SES students. School personnel wanted to know about the inservice practices and effective instructional practices reportedly existing in Johnson City. CESS organized a trip which introduced them to a research-driven school system. What the "Network" schools were beginning to do was confirmed in another district.

This activity prompted further discussion and development among the Franklin County Districts and UVM. The group decided to send teachers, school board members, and administrators to the Annual Outcomes Based Conference in Johnson City, and develop a university graduate course on Effective Instruction Practices. (The course subsequently enrolled over ninety people in three locations during the spring, 1985, semester.)

These activities, and other related efforts, make it clear that schools did not have the necessary baseline data in order to make good decisions. By studying and attending to research-driven institutions, the member representatives were

becoming conscious of the need to do research themselves. This need led to the acknowledgement of knowledge and skills gaps which, in turn, led to further training. Courses and workshops on tests and measurements were provided. Research and concomitant knowledge and skills took on new meaning and urgency. Key individuals became convinced that school practices must be validated by research and that school practitioners must remain abreast of research developments. School-university collaboration moved from idea to need to reality.

The districts, applying some of their new knowledge about inservice, devised a research-based training plan and gave release time for five to seven teachers and administrators to form a research team. The teams selected areas and issues to research in their districts and became more comprehensive in collecting data.

School activity has been assisted by CESS faculty. Professors have been involved significantly in data collection, training, documentation, and teaching. The schools are using the data in their decision making processes to set goals for future networking activities.

### Present and Future Directions

The school systems in the Network agreed on a single mission: all students will learn well what schools want them to learn. They also agreed that students from their schools must exhibit four exit characteristics:

- Positive self-concept as learner and person
- Cognitive skill levels
- Problem solving, communications, decision-making, accountability, and group process skills
- Self-directed learner characteristics

Member schools designed training packages and collection systems to measure these characteristics to improve their acknowledged inadequate data bases. The schools now utilize the Effective Schools Research, as well as some of their own adaptations. They believe in knowing to what degree they are being effective in carrying out the following:

1. Effective school site management and democratic decision making

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2. Leadership
3. Staff stability
4. Curriculum articulation and organization
5. Staff development
6. District support
7. Collaborative planning and collegial relationships
8. Sense of community
9. Clear goals and high expectations commonly shared
10. Order and discipline

Each school collects information concerning these and uses it to make decisions. Some collect it through the use of formal instruments and some through a less formal, more interactive process; all share information.

Network schools disseminate information about research-based best practice in teaching, curriculum and organization to all teachers. Teacher meeting time is devoted to discussions of these issues. For example, several secondary school staffs are reading material on the effects of tracking on students. They are going to reorganize their schools using cooperative learning groups. They are also studying the research on discipline and the effects structure have on behavior, hoping to inform their organizational restructuring. They are acting purposefully as a result of research-based knowledge.

The schools have developed the belief systems they see as vital to their activities:

1. Talent can be developed.
2. Excellence for all is possible.
3. Prevention of failure must be continuous.
4. Optimism about learning must prevail.
5. Cooperative learning is an effective model of classroom organization and instruction.
6. Inclusive programs are vital.
7. Mastery learning is a good process.

8. Trust is necessary to growth.
9. Success follows success.
10. Validation of effort must occur.

Local boards of education are not omitted from consideration. The analysis of current policy and the development of new policy are parts of continuous evaluation of schools in light of evolving research. This process suggests inservice for school boards and community concerning the best practices and locally carried out data collection as well as the need to keep the community informed about school performance. Networking schools are increasing the amount of in-school time teachers have for planning curriculum, working new instructional processes, and developing inservice through a problem solving model. This continuous system of designing, testing, adapting and monitoring is vital.

### Recommendations

Schools should not start by attempting quick adaptations. Change begins with individuals and is highly dependent on trust and human growth. Conceptual change and belief system development are slow processes and take time. The following steps are suggested:

1. Identify existing local information, or develop it based on test scores, public perceptions, student absentee rate, student dropout rate, teacher absenteeism, teacher turnover, or other performance indicators.
2. Elicit the help of all significant groups, including professional researchers, in gathering, organizing, and interpreting data.
3. Provide the information in summary form to all consumers.
4. Provide an overview and basic information concerning the research on best practices.
5. Find people who are positive and review the best instructional practices with them.
6. Have the positive teachers visit places where these practices are being applied.



7. Provide training or released time; use a combination of practitioners, higher education people, and other consultants.
8. Test out in practice, test and retest.
9. Develop a communication system to disseminate and discuss the use of practice.
10. Ask others to participate.
11. Provide people with information on the best administrative practices.
12. Provide time to discuss administrative practices among all interested parties.
13. Develop, implement and adjust the system.
14. Promote a belief system based on research on learning and communications research.
15. Establish desired characteristics involving all school groups including school boards.
16. Design broad-based data collection systems.
17. Work on improving board policy.

These steps often overlap. The combination of these steps forces leaders into a critical stance: action based on quality educational research.

Life in the Northeastern Vermont Mastery Learning/Outcome-Based Network schools is different from what it was five years ago. There is less personal isolation, curricular guesswork, idiosyncratic staff development, and random administrative moves; there is more collaboration, inquiry, record-keeping, shared and focused curriculum development, acknowledgement of research, and belief in a future. Finally, there is productive coexistence among the various components, each recognizing what the other does well. Members know that human unions are fragile and subject to change; consequently, time must be given to nurture productive relationships.



# A Pathway to Instructional Improvement: Priming the Territory

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Pressure to improve schooling has become a way of life for principals. Numerous reports have been published criticizing American secondary schools and leadership is often censured for lack of action (Adler, 1982; Boyer, 1983). However, research has shown that leadership is critical in school improvement efforts (Hall, Rutherford, Hord, & Huling, 1984). Despite all of the demands for change and occasional finger-pointing, principals usually are not provided with practical professional development designed to foster workable solutions. In spite of this lack of support, research conducted in high schools throughout the United States has shown that some principals are moving ahead. They start on the road to instructional improvement by priming the territory with non-threatening, but needed, school improvement projects. One such principal and his practical strategies for change will be highlighted in this paper.

## A National High School Study

High school researchers from the Research on the Improvement Process (RIP) program at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education conducted three years of research in 30 high schools. The RIP high school research focused directly on the study of change, the kinds of changes taking place, and the role and influence of the various constituent groups on the change process. The high schools included in the study were selected to represent the United States geographically and to represent all sizes of schools, including large urban, suburban, medium city, and small rural schools. These

schools were located in school districts that typify a cross section of American school systems. Some schools were facing rapid growth and others were struggling for survival because of declining enrollments. District enrollments at the study schools ranged from 1,000 to 200,000 and school enrollments from 317 to 2,500. The minority student population ranged from 1% to 99%.

The study was conducted in three phases. Phase One of the study was exploratory in nature. Research staff visited high schools to learn how the schools were organized, to gain a sense of the contextual factors that appeared to have importance for change efforts, and to ascertain the kinds of changes high schools were attempting. Phase Two of the study was more focused in its design and conduct. Nine pairs of schools were investigated to learn where changes were originating, how change was managed, and where leadership for change efforts was supplied (Hall, et. al, 1983; 1984). Phase Three explored the roles of specific constituent groups in high school change and provided an understanding of the interrelationships of the groups as they engaged in the process of school improvement. The groups included principals, assistant principals, department heads, teachers, and central office personnel (Rutherford, et. al, 1985).

### Main Dilemmas

When Ralph Berry, the principal, was assigned to Midvale, it had a dismal reputation. While some of the problems of this story are unique to Midvale High School, the major dilemmas facing Ralph Berry in school improvement are similar to those facing many schools, rural to urban. In general terms, each major dilemma can be classified as either a lack of human resources or a lack of fiscal resources.

When Ralph Berry became principal of Midvale, human resources both outside and inside the school were not actively involved. Parents and the general community lacked any sense of ownership for the school. Parental indifference was demonstrated by their lack of interaction with the school. Parental indifference was contained in a community generally negative about the high school. Anything the community perceived about Midvale High School was "bad."

Inside the school, the situation was not much better. Disrespect by students was apparent not only in the way property was treated, but also by the way people were treated. Teachers stood by helplessly, immobilized by their lack of efficacy. Funds were not available to enlist outside human resources to supply the energy for the few in Midvale who might be willing to step forward.

Coupled with an inadequate availability of energized human resources was a marked lack of fiscal resources. Budgeted money was available to replace

broken windows and for minimal building maintenance; however, no funds were available for school improvement efforts.

In essence, there was no money. There was a negative community attitude. There was a feeling of powerlessness by teachers. There was a gross disregard for order and authority by a few students and a feeling of hopelessness in other students. No one wanted to work or attend school at Midvale High.

The principal was convinced that a first step was improving an enhancing the school as a workplace which would stimulate pride in the school, allowing the old reputation to overcome so the school would once again become a place of learning. He had a vision of the high school as an attractive, appealing place with people who wanted to be there, who liked being there, who would be proud to tell their friends about "their" school. When this first step could be established, then attention to instructional improvement on a school-wide basis could begin in earnest. Initially, Berry turned his attention to the dilapidated walls in the school's entryway. By various "creative" measures he accessed supplies and enlisted students and teachers who created colorful murals on the once decaying walls. Esthetic building changes constituted only 2.4% of the kinds of changes identified in the RIP High School Study (Rutherford, 1984), which may be an indicator of this principal's unique approach to school improvement.

### The Principal's Process for Action

School improvement can be thought of as consisting of stages--initiation, mobilization, implementation and refinement. In this story, the principal's actions are organized by these stages.

**Initiation.** The principal utilized "policy reinterpretation" and "creative insubordination" to get his plans underway. Funds were provided to the school for a summer recreation program with the expectation that they would be spent on athletic equipment and crafts materials. Although the walls of the school were in disrepair and marred by an accumulation of graffiti, no funds were available for their improvement. To bring these two factors into alignment, the principal read the summer program activities guidelines, "reinterpreted" their intent and allocated the funds to be spent on paint and brushes, stepladders and other supporting materials necessary for the creation of interesting murals. More funds were subtly redirected as needed to launch the program he had in mind. He felt such rule bending was defensible as a means to a reasonable school improvement end, to obtain the necessary initial funds to start work toward his vision.

**Mobilization.** The principal engaged the assistant principals, a few teachers, and a few students in the first summer "recreation" project that involved running up and down ladders and creatively applying paint to the

walls. As a result of the effort, a few feet of dilapidated wall was transformed into a vibrant mural. This was only the first step in a long range plan to enlist more people and transform more walls. Berry encouraged more people to join in on Saturdays and summers and the murals became a hallmark of the school. "There are many kinds of ways and things in which we can excel. One of the areas we decided to use here in this school was the real art talents of our students. As we tour the building I'll kind of show you what we have done. The work around this building is student work. We have been able to do things to display their abilities."

**Implementation.** The repair work on the walls continues as an ongoing activity in the school. The walls are only occasionally marred by new graffiti, the building is being transformed and, importantly, a new climate is resulting in new norms. Berry constantly searches for "extra" money to fund new murals; all the walls have not yet been enhanced, although the project has been an integral part of the summer's activities for several years. The numbers of students and faculty who are actively engaged has slowly increased as the principal continues to solicit more participation and as they have seen the benefits of the project. As pointed out by the principal, the murals are a source of pride. "You'd be astonished at the number of kids who come in here before school starts or in the summer to bring friends who are visiting to show off their school. To show off the artwork."

**Refinement.** As Ralph Berry pointed out, the change of the building facility and climate is simply the beginning of a larger vision, the creation of an environment suitable and stimulating for learning. The existence of the murals is a visible sign that the climate at Midvale High School has changed toward the positive. This change of climate has fostered the learning environment of Ralph Berry's vision, and school-wide emphasis is now being placed on instruction in the program areas. Berry admits "program building...is a long, slow process. If it is really to have impact, it's got to be done in a systematic way."

By initially concentrating on a non-threatening project, Ralph Berry has nurtured the process necessary for more substantive school improvement efforts. To foster consistency and direct attention to academic skills in the program areas, Berry has taken a page from the elementary administrator's handbook; that is, he is using an activity that is more typical of elementary schools. Each month he selects a skill in one of the academic areas that will become the focus of every teacher and every student's attention. "I give them worksheets on the skill-of-the-month, and then we use it. We introduce it to all teachers. We have developed a kind of uniformity with focus on programs."

After the painting project was well underway and the skill-of-the-month was becoming an accepted norm, he said, "I think Midvale is a school that has commenced movement on the academic level. I think we have resolved or

routinized those things that you have to do in a school to make a school attractive, orderly, and ready for work. We have moved now to additional goals that are attainable for us and that are visible. I think that is key in the school. You have to look at your resources and you have to say what it is that you can do and really get a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment from, then build on that in program areas. These are the kinds of things that in the last three or four years we have made gigantic strides in doing. That's why I feel pretty good about our school and where it's going." On a more concrete level, the principal explained the value of the murals, "I live here. We live here. It should be an attractive facility. That [the murals] is important as a signal of successful action, and we can now move with energy into the program areas."

Conceiving a vision or vision building, coupled with the definition of school-wide goals to address the vision, is a key dimension of the principal's effectiveness. Berry's ability to translate his vision into clearly defined projects visible by all community members, is another key to his effective facilitation of the change process (Hall & Guzman, 1984).

### Managing School Improvement

School improvement at Midvale High School takes place outside of the formal administrative structure. The principal is clearly the focal point. Typically, he initiates change by exploring existing resources, creatively reshaping them to serve the purposes of the change, which could result in reassigning a staff person to become a "major mover." He does not work immediately with the entire faculty, but identifies and fashions a key catalyzer and builds the change process around a few persons. He devotes little energy to converting the negative influences and even less with the large neutral majority.

Ralph Berry carefully picks his projects, enlists his cadre of activists, initiates the effort, and moves into action. He has his own priorities and personally engages in them. He is clear about his expectations of others. He does his job and expects others to pursue theirs with a similar dedication.

An opportunist of sorts, he has an uncanny ability to selectively energize his staff. He quietly and efficiently utilizes his own strengths and the strengths of his staff to upgrade and improve his school. His driving vision is of Midvale High as a stimulating place for learning.

### Dealing With Interested and Uninterested Groups

The principal chose to form an informal management group for school improvement rather than utilize the existing formalized management structure.

He was able to effectively "circumnavigate" any developing opposition, since the opponents were unable to target a specific structure through which to protest. They directly addressed Berry who was able to defuse their concerns. However, most constituent groups were neither actively negative nor actively supportive. Berry saw this disinterested majority population as an advantage because it reduced the negative numbers that might have demanded his immediate and direct attention. Berry experienced direct negative interference from only one source, the central administration.

When addressing the problem of dealing with the central administration, Berry said, "I grew up in this school system. For certain things, I think you have to take it. I came from there [the central administration] to this position. I know all the people down there and we have a relationship. I understand what their heat really is about and therefore it doesn't impact me in a devastating way that you might imagine." When asked to describe how he avoids unwarranted "heat," Berry explained that avoidance was neither possible nor expected. He faces the issues that central administration raises and is concerned about. This is done in face-to-face interviews where intense discussions may occur over policies or decisions that are not useful or that are counterproductive to Berry. Some he wins; some he loses. But he counts more of his scores in the win column than in the losses column. Overall, his confidence and his successful performance as principal help him to maintain a balanced perspective. "I would say it's a fair assumption that they respond to heat also. If some group is bringing up each month on their agenda with the superintendent a particular problem or school, they have an obligation to check it out." In other words, pressure from central administration is an expected norm and rather than being unduly distressed by it or reacting to it, Berry simply views dealing with it as part of the pressures of the job.

On the whole the local community, parents, teachers, and students neither supported nor inhibited Berry's early efforts to improve the building and subsequently the climate. As the murals unfolded and evolved, segments of these groups became active supporters of the project. Indeed, success bred success and more students and teachers became active participants in the painting process. This enthusiasm reached into the community through the local news media.

The local news media contact was, in reality, another effective intervention created by Berry. He used his creative management strategies again to broadly interpret personnel policies, rearrange fiscal resources and assign an existing staff person as a half-time school public relations (PR) specialist. This PR person used this time to ferret out stories of good things happening at Midvale, write about them in positive ways and provide the prepared text to the local newspaper. In fact, "we were able to establish a relation with the newspaper to the extent that on any given week in our community paper, we may have had seven or eight articles. We hit people



with good things. I am sure that we have had an impact on some of that deep-seated belief that our school is a disruptive, wild place which it isn't. We are carrying forth that position this year." Indeed, a local newspaper has continued to carry lengthy stories about the positive changes occurring at Midvale High School (Loeb, 1984).

Parents have been seen as roadblocks to effective change efforts (Hord & Rutherford, 1985). Additionally, the perceptions of the local community can influence the atmosphere for acceptance of change. In fact, the image of the entire school district may be linked to community perceptions of the local high school (Hall, Hord, Rutherford, & Huling, 1984). However, at Midvale the principal has been able to neutralize the negative effects of parents and community by creating a positive school image. Overall, the support shown in the community is a sign of acceptance of the change.

### Strategy Analysis

Ralph Berry realized that a school with a reputation as a disruptive place was not going to be transformed overnight into an ideal learning environment. He focused his vision on an immediate, visible problem--the building facility. Berry knew this tactic was only one step in his game plan for providing a place where students and faculty could learn, a place of which all groups, within and without the school, could be proud. Berry's plan of improvement for Midvale High School contained a number of strategies.

1. He reinterpreted policies to acquire money that would be used for the good of the school. Berry said the budget had to be dealt with "through creativity."
2. He chose his opportunities and his support personnel carefully. He chose to go around formal school management roles and deal with people who he thought would most readily buy into his vision. Berry estimated that approximately one-fourth of the faculty would actively support him. He constantly enlisted their advocacy and ignored the quiet majority and the complaining minority.
3. While choosing specific people outside of formal roles to aid in his school improvement plan, Berry was careful not to confront those entrenched in formal management positions. He purposefully did not antagonize those residing within the formal structure. He listened carefully, adhered to required protocol, and totally ignored any of their efforts to tamper with his vision of school improvement.

4. Because of the negative attitudes both within the local community and within the school community, Berry used persuasion rather than confrontation to initiate action. He began an active, positive, nonthreatening project aimed toward raising school pride. In initiating his program, he carefully selected specific promising students and faculty members to join him. He orchestrated his school improvement project carefully, in order to insure its success. His modest first effort acted as encouragement to initiate his more far-ranging vision.

Clear themes emerge from these strategies: **know your territory and take a calculated risk.** Berry roamed his building and knew the students and faculty. His experience at the central office prepared him for the pressure levied from that source. He acknowledged the power of negative influences and then worked around them. He knew what to expect from each segment. Using this information he took educated risks in order to provide the fiscal and human resources necessary to mobilize his vision. Berry's risks were based on a clear assessment of the problem, the context, the bureaucracy. They were calculated risks taken to create the best promise of success. His work was permeated by the theme "Hold to Your Vision."

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# A Differentiated Supervision Program Applied in a Small School Setting

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Legislators, parents, business leaders and school administrators view teacher performance as crucial in quality education. These groups place emphasis upon the improvement of teacher performance. This interest has resulted in three major thrusts:

1. Upgrading the quality of individuals completing college teacher preparation programs
2. Strengthening state licensing or certification requirements
3. Administering an on-the-job assessment to both new and experienced teachers

The latter movement constitutes an area of both controversy and promise. On-the-job assessment of teachers provides both a challenge and an opportunity for the small school principal.

Large schools and systems, generally located in urban and metropolitan areas, have numerous resources with which to conduct on-the-job assessment of teacher performance, and meet the expectations of the many groups and individuals trying to improve education today. These schools have a large pool from which to draw teachers. However, the smaller schools, particularly

those in rural areas, generally rely upon the principal for assessment of teacher performance. And these schools often recruit heavily to find teachers in areas such as science, mathematics, special and vocational education. The supervision and evaluation responsibilities of the principal in a small school are particularly important because the process must build on the strengths of the teachers committed to the education of children in each small school. The process must include criteria which are currently being used and include added dimensions which support the minimally competent teacher and reward the master teacher.

On-the-job assessment of teacher performance often requires the use of a local school, system, or state set of criteria by which to measure the performance of the teacher. The criteria may include: planning of instruction, methods of instructional delivery, use of evaluation materials and records, communication skills, classroom management skills, and professional responsibilities. The person evaluating the teacher generally rates the teacher's performance using a scale. The typical key includes the following scores: (1) satisfactory; (2) needs improvement; (3) unsatisfactory; (4) does not apply. Some criteria vary, and some rating scales have more variety, but often the evaluation form is completed annually as presented above.

This annual evaluation exercise, although sometimes frightening for the beginning teacher, is not difficult; the majority of teachers complete the requirement with satisfactory scores. Most higher education teacher preparation programs include such an exercise during the student teaching or internship experience and many students complete the assignment with ease. Few rating scales or supervisory programs differentiate between the minimally competent teacher given satisfactory scores and the truly master teacher also evaluated as "satisfactory."

As states examine various types of merit pay and career ladder approaches, and as smaller and rural schools face serious recruiting needs, evaluation and supervision have gained greater meaning. Previously, length of service and degree status have been the primary factors influencing compensation. Now, it appears that supervision becomes even more critical when the reward system is linked to the evaluation process. For small schools which have hired hard to find science or math teachers, proper supervision may encourage these teachers to stay in education and/or to improve their instructional techniques. A system designed to determine minimal competency may be only a minor part of the supervision program necessary not only to encourage the mediocre and beginning teachers, but also to recognize and challenge the talented veteran. A differentiated supervision program is needed which will:

- Approach evaluation systematically
- Build around an individual teachers' identified strengths and weaknesses

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- Allow the weak teachers to grow by providing them with the direction, resources and support necessary to overcome weaknesses
- Challenge the talented, veteran teachers who may possess stronger teaching skills than the supervisor
- Provide growth for those teachers who excel with little supervision (Glatthorn, 1984)

Strong, experienced teachers need to be offered a variety of supervisory approaches designed to help them attain a stage of professional development which may be well above most levels identified by supervisory processes designed to evaluate minimum competency. This stage of professional development may also be higher than the observing supervisors, but by individualizing the approach, both teachers and supervisors may design a plan superior to a program supplied by the state or system, or which relies solely on the expertise of the observing supervisor.

### A Model for Differentiated Supervision Program

Mountain Park Elementary School in Fulton County, Georgia, has initiated a differentiated supervision program for their eighteen classroom teachers. This model is designed to take three years to implement fully. During the first year, the entire faculty is observed by the supervisor (in small schools, this role usually falls to the principal) and evaluated using the state instrument, the Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI) (Capie, 1980), and the correlate system form. The results of this first year evaluation provide the design for the second year of the program. Truly competent teachers are provided with an opportunity to participate in various types of supervisory programs, while the non-tenured and teachers experiencing difficulties follow a supervisory program built around the areas of need identified in the prior year's evaluation. The third year provides the latter group with an opportunity to improve and eventually participate fully in the supervisory process while the talented veterans pursue the supervisory approach appropriate for the next stage of their professional growth.

### Steps in Implementing a Differentiated Supervision Plan

During the first year of this plan at Mountain Park Elementary School, a differentiated supervision program was presented to the entire faculty. Each teacher received a handbook describing an overview of the entire supervisory process, specific descriptions of the five phases in the first year, copies of all

forms that would be used, and a copy of the observation instrument, Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI). Well in advance of the implementation date, several faculty meetings were devoted to the explanation of these materials and the principal was readily available for discussion. The five phases included in the first year of the plan were:

1. Goal-setting Conference

The teacher and the principal worked together to identify goals for the teacher to accomplish during the school year including descriptions that specifically identified activities and resources required to meet the identified goals.

2. Observation and Follow-up Conference

Based on a written lesson plan and observation of a class period, teacher performance was assessed by the principal on teaching plans and materials, classroom procedures, and interpersonal skills through the administration of the TPAI. During a follow-up conference the principal and the teacher discussed the teacher's performance on each competency assessed in the TPAI. If areas were identified that needed improvement, the principal and the teacher cooperatively developed a written plan for improvement that included resource people, staff development courses, and dates for follow-up observations. The teacher received a copy of the written plan.

3. Observation and Follow-up Conference

Same format as #2

4. Observation and Follow-up Conference

Same format as #2

5. Observation and Follow-up Conference

The fourth observation followed the same format as the previous observations and conferences; however, this final observation served as a summative evaluation providing a basis for the design of the second year of the supervision program.

Based on the assessment in the first year of the program, differentiated modes of supervision were designed for individual teachers to pursue in the second year of the plan. Tenured teachers receiving "Satisfactory" ratings on all competences assessed in the TPAI were offered a plan of supervision designed to meet their needs and interests and provide a source of continuous professional development. The teachers and the principal designed several different models of supervision and decided which type would be most

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beneficial to the growth of each teacher. Some suggested models for selection were:

1. Goal-setting

The principal observes only during classroom activities that are relevant to the goals set in the goal-setting conference at the beginning of the year, working cooperatively with the teacher to meet those goals.

2. Cooperative Supervision

Teachers work in collegial supervisory teams collecting data while observing in each team members' classroom and analyzing that data in post-conferences with team members.

3. Clinical Supervision

The teacher chooses to continue in the highly structured supervisory relationship with the principal.

4. Data-based Evaluation

The teacher selects to design or locate instruments that will assess teacher effectiveness from several different sources (students, peers, parents, administrators, self, etc.).

5. A hybrid of the above types or any other types that the teacher and/or principal design.

Each teacher specifically designs the chosen model including objectives to be met, activities designed to meet those objectives, and a schedule for meeting with the principal to discuss progress made in the selected design of supervision.

Non-tenured teachers and those who experienced difficulty on any competency in the prior year's assessment follow the highly structured clinical supervision model focusing on the areas of assessed need. The principal continues to serve as the observing supervisor providing a plan for improvement which includes frequent observations, specific feedback on teaching performance, and recommended resources. Tenured teachers who need improvement in some area may follow the differentiated model of supervision when they demonstrate mastery in all areas of the TPAI. Non-tenured teachers are offered the differentiated model beginning the first year of tenure, assuming that mastery has been demonstrated on all competencies of the TPAI. Teachers who continue to experience difficulty in demonstrating teaching competencies will be reviewed for possible termination procedures.

The guidelines established in the second year will be followed in subsequent years of supervision planning, enabling non-tenured and deficit teachers to improve their teaching performance and eventually join the differentiated supervision program. Meanwhile, competent teachers along with the principal will continue to develop their own mode of supervision. Every three years, teachers in the differentiated supervision plan will be re-assessed using the TPAI.

Of the eighteen teachers assessed in the first year of this program at Mountain Park Elementary School, twelve tenured teachers demonstrated mastery in all competencies of the TPAI, two tenured teachers were deficit in one or more competencies, and two of the four non-tenured teachers were deficit in one or more areas. Three new teachers will join the staff next fall, beginning the supervision program in the first cycle of the model. Thus, twelve strong, experienced teachers will follow modes of supervision designed to provide continuous growth for their individual needs while the principal works closely with the remaining nine teachers requiring the clinical supervision model.

### Reflections and Recommendations

Throughout the first year of this program, faculty reaction was noted by the principal during faculty meetings, individual teacher conferences, and from a questionnaire administered at the end of the year. Initially, the teachers were apprehensive about the program; more specifically, they were afraid of an observation instrument that explicitly stated which teacher competencies should be demonstrated during the evaluation process. As the teachers grew more comfortable with the instrument and with the principal's observations, anxiety subsided, and a greater awareness of quality teaching emerged. Once the faculty realized the observations were being conducted in a positive tone, the instrument was reasonable, and the principal could be trusted to "pull no surprises," they fully accepted the program and indicated excitement about the prospects of a differentiated supervision program specifically designed with them in mind.

In small schools, like Mountain Park Elementary School, the role of supervisor falls totally on the shoulders of the principal. Along with the myriad of other duties, the amount of time available to the principal to devote to a project such as this one is limited. Small schools must increase the number of individuals involved in the supervisory process, not only to assist the principal in this task, but to provide an objective and fair supervision and evaluation program. Next year the principal of this school plans to develop a supervisory team composed of the principal and two expert peer teachers. This three member team will serve as supervisors in the clinical supervision model

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for non-tenured and deficit teachers. It is hoped that by using this approach, the capacity to supervise teachers by providing additional time and expertise will strengthen the supervision and evaluation functions of the school. Multiple observers will also remove individual bias from the process.

### Keys to Successful Implementation

Several factors are critical to the success of this supervision and evaluation plan. In introducing the model, individuals must take much care to reduce the anxiety level of the faculty members. The faculty should be given ample time to become familiar with the process and the instruments involved. Detailed materials and discussion related to the process are best introduced the year before the anticipated implementation date. Communication must be clear and direct. The evaluator/supervisor must be available for frequent discussion. Rumors distort perceptions of the teachers and evaluation rumors are frightening, particularly to the inexperienced or new faculty member.

In an elementary school, such as the one where this model was tested, the principal is usually the person completing the process. Previous supervisory experiences at the school will have had an important impact on the introduction of this model. The faculty must believe the principal will not ask them to do anything unfair or unreasonable.

Continual revisions in this program are important to the vitality and improvement of the differentiated supervision program. Each school must integrate the model and program into their unique setting. The result should be the improvement of teaching. The inexperienced and weak teachers will be assisted in reaching achievable goals, and the outstanding teachers will design their own challenges, thus making the process truly reflect individual strengths and needs.

The support and encouragement of the cadre of existing teachers will increase the workload of the principal. Turnover of faculty should decrease and morale should improve. All principals dream of starting the school year with a school staffed with master teachers who are highly motivated. This differentiated supervision program may be the first step in realizing the dream.



## Prologue

# The Principal and the Rural and Small School Vision

Anderson, in "Principals and Time," insists that principals must take time to reflect if they want to be effective. His observations are based on his experiences with the Danforth School Administrators Fellowship Program, an effort directed at principals in urban high schools. Anderson makes an effective connection between the specific insights gleaned from the program experiences and principals' needs generally. The idea of reflection, of contemplation, in an area of employment noted for its constant activity is almost radical. Readers can learn things adaptable and applicable to their local situation from Anderson's descriptions of what happens in the program described. His concluding suggestions are rich in implication.

Ann Hart's "The Reflective Principal" is a valuable, albeit unintentional explication of part of Anderson's position. Hart contends that crisis situations can set the pattern for day-to-day behavior, thus precluding much reflection beyond a cursory thought or two. Hart wants principals to reflect more, to do less in the way of fast reaction and decision, more in the way of considered analysis prior to and during action. Hart implies that the rush-to-action mentality fosters occasionally bad decisions and little or no application of professional learnings to concrete situations.

Duncan Oliver's "Attaining High Standards in High School," contains many ideas seen and heard before. There is little that is "new" in Oliver's article. While Oliver may not present a futures-oriented description, he presents a series of ideas, suggestions about practice, and injunctions regarding interpersonal activities often spoken of but rarely practiced in one place. There is a consistency about Oliver's remarks that, if acted on, would create an environment rarely attained.

Oliver contends that the total school staff involvement is vital to change and success; F. William Sesow extends participation even more. He writes of an old dilemma for schools: that of recognizing that the curriculum of children is more than what the school offers, and he proposes actions on the recognition. In "Cooperative Curriculum Planning with Youth Organizations," Sesow argues that rural schools should be heavily involved with some of the out-of-school organizations that form part of the students' curriculum. The future appears to be one in which young people will be

learning more and more from out-of-school curricula. Sesow provides a way of doing this.

Wide involvement in a variety of ways and places is characteristic of Howard Wooden, a young educator enjoying his current position and reflecting on his work history. In "Career Ladders in Education," Wooden shows how the education profession remains, at some levels, an open system. His story, told in enthusiastic language, prompted us to place the piece in the Futures section. For some, the article may have a nightmarish quality. Small school principals may see some of themselves in Wooden's narration; clearly, he provides useful information on how to spot a corner in a school. Finally, he shows--in case there are doubters--that the future belongs to the young.

Dennis Littky, in his "Moving Toward a Vision," shows how a principal new to a troubled school can use a variety of school and community resources to provide direction and promote ownership. Littky's evident energy and imagination point the way towards one model of principal vital to the future of small schools everywhere.

But, in schools as elsewhere, the young become middle-aged and grow older. Edna Kaplowitz writes of a concern that will be with school administrators and staffs for several years; namely, older faculty. In her "The Older Staff and Its Renewal" Kaplowitz urges that administrators focus on the issue and capitalize on older faculty's strengths and wisdom. Sensitive to the possible dilemmas in older faculty lives, Kaplowitz shows ways in which their lives can enrich schools, but first the individuals themselves must feel valued both for what they have done and what they are capable of doing. Kaplowitz takes a potential problem and makes of it an opportunity. In a letter accompanying a revision of her references, Kaplowitz commented on a very practical matter of working with old faculty: "A recent enlightenment is the need to write larger when leaving messages on the sign-in book. Very few staff can read without glasses now, and they can't be bothered to take them out, just to sign their name. Therefore notices are unread unless written VERY LARGE." Practicality rules.

Vanderheiden, in "The Future of Rural and Small Schools," sees technology having a major impact on schools. His general comments soon focus on the impact on rural schools. He sees two possible results: fewer resources for rural schools because of cost efficiencies and possible school closings and consolidations. His vision of the future, however, is rich in the potential seen for effective student use of technology to promote learning.

# Principals and Time

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Since 1973, over 300 high school principals from 60 of the largest school districts in the nation have accomplished what is often considered impossible and implausible: regular and sustained time away from the desk, the office, and even the school building. This time has been used for personal-professional reflection, and renewal activities, out of which have sprung rejuvenation and increased enthusiasm in terms of the tasks of the principalship.

Twelve years ago, the Danforth Foundation initiated the Danforth School Administrators Fellowship Program, an inservice program for continued professional growth and development of urban senior high school principals. The program is based on the belief that educators should assume increased responsibility for their own professional growth. The exercise of such responsibility requires that administrators be provided with both time and access to specialized sources of expertise. The program requires the commitment of time from the participating school districts and the participating principals, and the Danforth Foundation provides resources to create opportunities for reflection and renewal activities.

Each year, the Foundation invites, on a geographical-regional basis, nine or ten school districts to express interest in participating in the Danforth School Administrators Fellowship Program. Following discussion with interested superintendents, five cities are then selected on the basis of interest, enthusiasm, and commitment relative to the notion of allowing and encouraging principals to take time off from their jobs to participate in the program. (For example, chosen for this current year's program were the cities of San Diego, California, San Francisco, California, Eugene, Oregon, Seattle, Washington, and Spokane, Washington.) Five principals in each city are expected by the Foundation and the participating school district to give a minimum of 50 days during the school year (combined with a 5-day summer orientation) for a basic commitment of 55 days to pursue professionally-related interests. The school superintendents designate the principals who become Danforth Fellows, and the Danforth Foundation then finances and gives direction to the program activities. These activities include:

- a) a five-day summer workshop for all program participants;
- b) five intercity meetings, each approximately two days long, for the 25 Fellows;
- c) monthly meetings within each city for the five participating principals;
- d) ad hoc consultant services provided for the principals and their schools by a local coordinator. In each city, the Danforth Foundation and the school district jointly appoint a part-time coordinator who is a skilled trainer-supervisor, knowledgeable about the problems and processes of contemporary urban education administration. This coordinator is typically engaged from a local college or university.

It has long been known that principals, almost by definition, are givers of self. Due to the structure of education, the principal is an authority figure on whom rely students, teachers, staff, parents and community. The job can often become overwhelming, even in the smallest of schools, as one tries to respond to the multiplicity of demands from those who need the principal's time, assistance, advice (personal and professional), and physical presence. The significance of the principalship is further accentuated by the professional literature and current research citing the principal as the key to effective schools as well as by the response of many central office personnel pressured by the current emphasis on educational improvement and reform. The principal must work harder and perform better as the instructional leader of the school.

When do school principals have time of their own? Interestingly, there are enlightened superintendents in various parts of the country who readily recognize the pressures and time constraints put on principals. These persons understand the need for principals to distance themselves periodically from the stress and strain of everyday, on-the-job activity. Also of equal interest is the fact that many principals, because of the long-held ingrained belief that they are absolutely critical to their school, their kids, and their teachers, are often reluctant to enter the Danforth School Administrators Fellowship Program. Yearly, as the program commences, the chosen principals are somewhat wary as to what is being asked of them, and to one degree or another, broach the subject of time. They don't have enough extra time, they can't leave their schools, there is too much to do, they and only they, can handle the day-to-day operation. This attitude fairly typifies how principals regard their role and the expectations of their role. Principals must, they feel, be present, be visible, and continue to give, give, give.

Initially, principals who find their way into the Danforth School Administrators Fellowship Program are to a degree "placed" in the program. While superintendents are willing to give and encourage time and travel

opportunities, many of the principals-Fellows just cannot, with ease, break away from their routine for their own sake. At first, many of the principals regard the opportunity as another typical inservice program, differentiated only by being a private foundation effort. Recognizing the reluctance of principals to take or make the time commitment, the program as structured tries to observe that which is known about adult growth, development and learning. The program, early on, expresses the Foundation's belief in the importance of the role principals play in the educational process by establishing participating principal-Fellows as resources, one to another, both within respective participating cities, as well as among and between the participating school districts. These principals have an opportunity during their "program time" to visit and observe each other's schools for comparison and contrast with their own, and engage in individual and group projects within each city to foster their own professional growth and to impel a course of action to correct a problem area in that school district.

Over the years the Danforth School Administrators Fellowship Program has fostered a lively exchange of information among participants and encouraged the mutual support, reinforcement, and help in problem-solving. Friendship, esprit de corps, comradeship, and networking, are good descriptors of programmatic outcomes. However, there is structure (format), there are expectations (projects), and there is a degree of monitoring (program coordinator in each city) involved. Goals of the program are as follows:

1. To establish (or re-establish) a pattern of professional development for each Fellow.
2. To provide opportunities for the Fellows to learn new leadership skills in improved management techniques.
3. To permit Fellows to observe schools of their peers in the program for comparison and contrast to their own.
4. To cause Fellows to engage in individual and group projects within each city in order to help set a pattern of self-growth for each Fellow and to set in motion a course of action to improve and identify problem areas in the school district.
5. To broaden the knowledge-base of Fellows about available resources that each principal can tap for helpful counsel, advice, and information.
6. To encourage increased collegiality among the five principals participating in each city.

7. To establish an enlarged acquaintance among peer professionals for mutual support, reinforcement, sustenance, and exchange in problem-solving.
8. To initiate efforts in professional development in each participating school district that may be expanded in subsequent years.
9. To encourage increased understanding and communication in each participating city between the Fellows and their superintendent.
10. To provide a linkage to and impact on the institutions of higher education involved in the program through an appointed professor who serves as a local coordinator in each city.

Each year as the culminating program activity, principals are asked to account for their 50 plus days of program-related experiences. In summary, principals are invariably appreciative of the chance to have participated in the program. They acknowledge that they indeed learned much from the opportunity to travel to other cities and observe schools, dialogue with peers from different settings, develop individual and group projects aimed at improved educational leadership, and get to know better their peers in their own school district. Going beyond that, however, the comment is often made that after a year's involvement in the Danforth program, the benefits of finding time to devote to their own personal-professional growth and development needs is readily apparent. Many principals at the end of the program year better understand the requirement of self-initiating that time, insisting on it as an absolute requirement, not just for themselves, but for the ultimate benefit of those whom they are most interested in serving. Ostensibly, the principals who "reflect" and "renew" are fresh, enthusiastic, and better able to meet the needs of their schools as a result of taking time to read, think, and ponder.

Without the largess of the resources of a Danforth Foundation to structure and shape such an opportunity for principals in small rural schools, what, then, might be instructive for principals? Obviously, the Danforth School Administrators Fellowship Program is a professional growth and development opportunity for a small number of principals. However, the past twelve years of the program have illustrated several positive outcomes that seemingly could be pertinent to principals in any setting. It is most obvious that rural and small school principals, just like their city colleagues, must face up to the question of time--precious time--for themselves to reflect on their role as principal and hopefully in the process to renew their professional outlook,

attitude and performance. Principals in small, rural school settings with limited financial and personnel resources might consider the following...

- Talk openly and freely with your superintendent until he or she agrees that, yes, you do need to re-consider your schedule and calendar as you are busily running your school. You might further be surprised as the superintendent agrees that it is desirable for you to "find" time.
- How much of your day is spent doing things that other staff, professional and non-professional, volunteers, and others (even students) could conceivably do? Think of ways to delegate the small stuff:
  - determine what it is
  - who can help you?
  - what are your priorities?
- Find a fellow-principal or two or three and get to know them on a personal-professional, not just a professional, basis. Share ideas, concerns, issues that affect you and your school. Use each other as sources of information and expertise. (Look outside your immediate district, if necessary, to locate a peer/colleague who might just be a kindred spirit.)
- Insist on carving out time--in blocks and chunks--and devote it to a project that will aim at the improvement of some aspect of your school. During this time, think pro-actively and strategically, rather than reactively and operationally. Set a year-long goal related to self-improvement on the job, in the school and in the district. Keep this in front of you on a priority basis and devote time to it.
- Do not feel guilty as you lean back in your chair, look out the window, and reflect. (As one superintendent involved in this year's Danforth School Administrators Fellowship Program recently said, "I want my principals to take time to sit back and to take time to think. They don't do it now because they are afraid to and really don't know how as they are so caught up in carrying out hundreds of activities a day!")
- Try to locate a respected resource person outside of your school and school district (university, business, community leader) who is knowledgeable about education. Establish a personal, professional relationship based on a common interest. Seek advice (free) and assistance. Offer your school as a facility to assist that person in her



## THE RURAL AND SMALL SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP

or his work. Though not easy, encourage constructive criticism of your procedures. How might the school be improved and how might the principal's time be better spent? (Often an outsider's opinion is that indeed the principal should find the time to reflect and take in the big picture.)

- Recognize that your school, your programs, and your people will go on without you. The single biggest contribution you, as principal (chief executive officer) in the school, can make is to create a vision and a goal for which all might strive. To do this well, however, requires sustained time on the part of the principal. Only the principal can create that time.

The principalship, any principalship large or small, urban or rural, is a difficult and demanding professional position. Expectations of the role are often confusing and contradictory. Principals are asked to do much with little. The school as a microcosm-community may revolve around the ability and inclination of the person in charge--the principal. In order to sort out those many demands and expectations, principals must have the right to exercise the privilege to make time to understand themselves and the environment for which they are responsible. The tricky part of that practice of reflection and renewal is that it must be intrinsically motivated by the principal.



# The Reflective Principal

by DR. ANN WEAVER HART

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Time for professional reflection is scarce in the principalship, generally, but for the rural principal who must often travel long distances to meetings and fill multiple roles in a school, finding reflective time is a tremendous challenge. Under such conditions--long commuting hours, multiple roles, many demands--time for immediate school problems cannot be shortchanged. Consequently, reflective time is often given up by busy administrators, an unfortunate loss because it is during reflection that principals can develop and examine instructional leadership strategies, long-range school plans, and personal development goals, and apply professional knowledge to complex problems. Borrowed and adapted from research, the techniques presented in this paper can provide a system and the time for reflection, increasing principal effectiveness through the use of thoughtful analysis.

## Reflectivity

The professional training of educational administrators provides a background in the psychology and sociology of individual and group behavior in organizations, theories of instruction and leadership, issues of supervision and techniques of clinical supervision, labor relations, and educational law, politics, history, and finance. The analysis of problems is emphasized and specific skills and techniques are developed. However, no training program can attempt to address every possible scenario in the complex work of administering schools. The application of the analytical skills and techniques acquired in professional programs is left to individuals as they make daily decisions in the principalship. The process of reflecting, thoughtfully examining complex problems and then applying acquired knowledge to their solution, is an important element of professional work in practice (Schon, 1983). Reflection is the thoughtful examination of complex school situations in which professional knowledge is applied to a unique context of action by the principal.

Deliberate thoughtfulness is an important factor in the quality of principals' application of their professional training and experience to the administration of their schools. Reflective process skills reduce the likelihood that the press of daily events will eliminate time for thoughtful analysis. There are several important reasons why the habit of professional reflectivity is justified. First, the complexity of school organizations mitigates against carte blanche applicability of recipes for administrative action. Second, the ambiguity of educational goals and multiple demands from a variety of sources makes the application of professional knowledge gained, from previous professional experience, and from interaction with colleagues vital to effective decisions. Third, emergency and spur of the moment demands arise often enough in the principalship. The immediacy of these pressures often precludes opportunities for information gathering, planning, strategy building, and the application of a principal's personal educational philosophy to the school. Fourth, cognitive overload alone will prevent its application in practice.

### A Technique for Reflecting

While a variety of techniques might be used to encourage the thoughtful application of professional knowledge, I will discuss a few specific practices that I have found to be easily applied, practical, and helpful in the administration of schools. These techniques have great potential for rural or small school principals who find the press of time and events particularly acute.

Systematic reflective techniques may initially seem time consuming. When practiced they actually create time and opportunity for hard-pressed principals to better lead their schools and reduce the sense of siege that sometimes develops. For example, one principal who practiced systematic information gathering and reflection, planning alternative strategies for problems and rehearsing possible arguments she might use to promote or support a leadership decision, found that she saved time. "When things are well set up and you're more confident of the professionalism of your decisions, they don't come back at you as much," she said.

Another benefit of reflective leadership is that it helps the principal establish emotional distance from school leadership decisions and interactions. Emotional distance is not a lack of caring but an ability to approach the principalship less buffeted by emotion. In order to take the fullest advantage of their opportunities, principals need to develop a sense of detachment from the personal ramifications of leadership decisions (Hodgkinson, 1983). Principals who cultivate a feeling of detachment are far freer to make important educational decisions for their schools than those tied in knots over the effects

on themselves of every action taken. Thoughtful detachment can be enhanced through reflectivity in professional practice.

### Systematic Records

The keystone of reflective practice is the systematic accumulation of information. A systematic record of events, individuals, and important environmental factors in the school collected by the principal provides a base on which the reflective process can rest. A journal can provide an invaluable resource for the reflective principal. The journal's function is analogous to that of patient records kept by doctors or psychologists, field notes prepared by biologists, or legal memoranda used by lawyers. A professional journal kept regularly, preferably every day, provides a wealth of information for the principal across time. Once the habit is developed, the more accurate short-term memory becomes the principal's resource, and information that might be lost over the course of days or weeks is preserved for reference. The regular collection of information also prevents the recall and interpretation of information filtered through the memory of intervening events and prevents emotional responses from coloring perceptions.

The journal can be divided into three parts for the most effective application of professional knowledge. In the first section, a chronology of the events of each day and the names of individuals involved can be kept. This section should be as objective as possible, with the principal deliberately exercising self-discipline to record what was observed. In the second section, professional knowledge can be applied interpretively to the information recorded. This section is where the principal uses the analytical context to apply professional knowledge to the action context (Argyris, 1979). In the third section, personal feelings and reactions can be recorded. While this may seem unnecessary, the act of recording emotions often helps school leaders to separate decisions from feelings without denying the legitimacy of those feelings.

The division of the journal into three sections has several major advantages: 1) While details are still sharp, important information is recorded and examined. Additionally, information that may be important in a few weeks or months is recorded. 2) By reflecting on information and events as they unfold, professional knowledge can be directly applied to the unique context of the school, community, and principal. 3) Personal feelings can be aired, accepted, and dealt within a safe setting. 4) Emotional distance from stressful interactions can be established. Solutions thus become the focus of the reflective process.

The hard pressed rural or small school principal often finds it difficult to find time to eat, much less to write. However, with the advent of word

processing, many principals find that their student information management systems provide a serendipitous resource for their own professional record keeping. A copy of the journal on a software disk as well as a paper copy can be kept for later quick reference. Other principals have found that long commuting distances provide the opportunity to record their journals on audio tape for later transcription by a secretary or aide. Audio tapes can also be replayed and analyzed during later commutes. Whatever the system the individual principal finds most efficient and comfortable, the journal provides an important professional resource as well as a satisfying record of professional efforts and development.

Records kept in the school provide another important source of information often neglected by principals in the press of school activities. Files and files of information are often collected and then never consulted. A common complaint about education and educators is that schools have a short organizational memory and thus tend to reinvent the wheel over and over again. This deficiency can be addressed by keeping and consulting school records. If important information is overlooked, decisions might be made based on faulty or inadequate data. Letters, faculty meeting agendas or minutes, PTA meeting minutes, or recent agendas with notes from principals' meetings can provide important insight into major school and district issues and avenues of opportunity for the principal.

Some issues require insight and illumination from sources not available to the principal from observed events or written records. People in the school, district, and community have important information that can be useful. Different points of view often present significant variations in perspective that principals need to take into account. Consequently, the reflective principal deliberately develops multiple sources of information.

The concept of the informant needs to be defined. Informants are not spies but sources of information from multiple perspectives. Some examples will help to illustrate the point. Collegial relationships with other principals can be helpful in clarifying and elaborating ideas. Colleagues with experiences in similar situations in other settings may have insights useful to the principal. Deliberate communication with peers on substantive leadership issues can serve a dual role; perceptions, interpretations, and alternatives can be considered while collegial support relationships are developed. Perceptions and feedback should also be sought from people whose interpretations might be different from the principal's or from those closest to the principal. Individuals identified in the community or school as mavericks can often provide feedback and safeguard against blind spots. Soliciting information from a variety of sources can also prevent group think, where everyone in a group seems in agreement and plunges ahead without honestly confronting controverting evidence. Multiple sources of information are invaluable (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

### **Analysis: Professional Reflectivity Applied to Action**

While the process of systematic reflectivity is deliberate, it need not be burdensome. I have argued that it will, in actuality, free the principal to use information and skills developed in training and in other settings more effectively. An important part of this process is the analysis of the information gathered. Analysis is an on-going process. The professional journal is the core of the information. It can include recorded observations, feedback from informants, and synopses of or references to the information gathered from written records. The principal can use several techniques to analyze these data. First, the process of creating the second section of the journal in which professional knowledge is deliberately applied to observed, acquired, and recorded information is an analysis as events unfold. Second, principals can periodically review the journal looking for: 1) patterns of developing issues (e.g., student control, academic performance, criterion referenced testing needs, teacher evaluation and supervision, tension over academic freedom issues, instructional leadership, and 2) a picture of perceptions, expectations, social patterns, authority norms, and environmental norms in the school, district, and community that may reveal areas where efforts need to be concentrated. Third, principals can analyze their personal traits in light of the current school context, set goals, and plan strategies to maximize their potential for positive leadership influence.

Our principals confront problems and opportunities in the light of the best knowledge and skills available to them; decisions, plans, and behaviors can be formulated based on the reflective analysis completed. The time spent in the gathering and analysis of information can become an integral part of principal's leadership behavior. Decisions must be made and action taken, regardless of the thoughtfulness of the process principals employ in schools or the quality of the information on which decisions and actions are based. Reflective principals are far ahead in increasing the effectiveness of their professional administrative leadership.

### **Conclusion**

Rural and small school principals face a variety of challenges. One of the most pressing is finding time to reflect on important educational issues and decisions in their schools. Initial training, conferences, in-service, and professional reading provide the knowledge and skill resources. The use of a systematic reflective process can enhance the application of knowledge and skills to the leadership of schools. It can provide the time and the method for maximizing professionalism in the administration of schools. The deliberate collection of information and its examination in light of factors important to

educational leadership, the unique qualities of the principal, and the context of the school can provide the opportunity many rural principals seek to apply their professional knowledge more thoughtfully and effectively to the schools they lead. Reflectivity provides a method for nurturing principal professionalism, a source of information on which principals can base school and personal development goals, and a source of satisfaction and fulfillment for the committed rural principal.

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# Attaining High Standards in High School

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The desire for high educational standards exists within every school building in America; there are always individual teachers who set high standards and have their students meet them. Administrators must identify those who have high standards and move other faculty to emulate them. Building-wide objectives are one way for schools to move. Goals must be developed for both individual teachers and departments within the school in order for the school to be successful. Only then can it function as a cohesive whole.

## Helping Individual Teachers

Administrators must insure everyone that they are working with teachers in accomplishing schoolwide objectives rather than merely evaluating the teachers. An effective way of initiating this, without teacher opposition, is for every professional member of the staff to set goals for each school year. These goals should be written and developed with an administrator. The teacher, the administrator, and department head (if there is one) should each receive a copy.

Goals in writing are less likely to be forgotten in the hectic following months of the school year. They remain true year-long goals. Goals should build on existing teachers' strengths as well as include new ideas and methods that teachers might try. Some goals should include areas where administrators can be involved and perhaps assist. This is a positive way of insuring that administration and teachers are working with one another. Activities such as these will relieve teachers' fears that goal-setting is simply a way of getting them to admit in writing that they have identifiable weaknesses. Teachers should understand this before the process starts.

Once the process has started, the administrator must remain fully involved, for few things make a staff feel more professional than having the school principal work with them in attaining goals. Having the administrator



see their strengths can be a very positive experience. Administrators can enhance this feeling by always treating staff professionally, even when some may not act professionally themselves. Dealing with problems in private rather than bringing them up at faculty meetings is a very satisfactory way of treating the staff with dignity. The administrator must believe, and communicate to others, that the teacher has the most important educational job in the school. Everyone must know that all other positions exist to assist the teachers in performance of their work.

Staff should make classroom visitations to see other methods in action, a fine way for teachers to broaden their spectrum. In some cases, budgetary or contractual issues may prevent visiting other schools. Regardless of the budget, teachers can visit other teachers' classes within the school. Principals should encourage this, and offer to cover class so that the teacher can visit. Such an act shows the principal's commitment to the process. The time spent in the classroom provides additional insight about how the class is run, and what has been accomplished by the teachers. Some of the most informed observations about what takes place within the teachers' classrooms can be made by working with the class without the teachers being present. The teacher should know what the principal liked about the class with little emphasis placed on the negative parts. Regular visitations with the teacher present can subsequently identify areas of concern.

Covering classes will also reinforce administrator statements that teaching is the most important event occurring in the building; it will also identify the principal as a teacher. Staff attitudes about administrators who "have been out of the classroom so long that they have forgotten what it's like" will soon disappear when the administrators take time to cover classes. Occasionally, taking the place of an absent teacher when substitutes are in short supply will provide further insight into what is happening within the school, to say nothing about building the visibility index of the principal among staff and students.

Regular classroom visitations should be as frequent as possible, at least to the point where teachers AND students expect to see others in classes and administrator presence causes no change in classroom plans. It is often advantageous to spend less than a full bell period in a class, and in many cases a twenty minute visit is more than sufficient. Two shorter separate visits are apt to show much more than one longer stay. However, presence at either the start or the end of the class is especially important in seeing how well time management is taking place.

After the visit, there should be immediate written and verbal follow-up so that the teacher is not left wondering how things went. Teachers become nervous when an observer takes notes during the observation, and it might be a good idea to avoid doing so if this is at all possible. Reading the teacher's goals before going into the classroom will refresh one's memory as to what to



look for, and these goals should be mentioned in the critique. In addition, observers should try to look for good things as well as suggestions for improvements. The asking of questions in the follow-up is a good way to leave the door open for further conversations. Observations and evaluations are extremely important in achieving high standards. The old adage, "People do well those things that are checked frequently" is often true.

While it is impossible to visit even a small fraction of the classes taking place within the school, there are means for the administrator to have a feeling for what is happening. One way is a long-range summer project to read every teacher's planbook, and make written comments to the teacher. Teachers should know of this plan at the start of the year, so as to avoid unpleasant "surprises." Many crossouts and corrections in a planbook are indicators that it is being used regularly. "Snowy Day" written in the planbook without any other plans, is a good indication that planning is not always taking place far in advance. Principals should look for and encourage teachers to make written comments in their planbooks about things that went well and those that didn't. Then, by using the planbook as a resource the following year, they can keep strong areas and work on improving less successful ones. Further, it gives them an established timeline to follow which will allow them to complete the curriculum objectives within the school year. By not checking planbooks, principals allow weaker teachers to "get off the hook" as far as planning is concerned. Poorly planned classes are usually less than outstanding.

### Departmental Responsibilities

High standards must be a departmental responsibility as well. Each department should have its own written policies that are followed. These should be written by the department with the department head in charge. Should there be no department head, then the administrator must assume the position and meet with all teachers who teach in the discipline. As a minimum, policies should include the amount and frequency of homework, the frequency of writing and testing, and an overall grading policy which includes such things as class participation, scaling of grades, as well as extra credit allowances. These policies will be most beneficial to the students who have weaker teachers, as they will set minimum requirements which otherwise might not be met.

Departmentalized testing for mid-term and final exams is another means by which standards are strengthened. Strong teachers will come naturally to the foreground in the preparation of tests, and weaker ones will work harder to catch up. The result is that every student will be exposed to the same material or types of material, further strengthening the curricula. Caution must be used, however, in this day of computers where grading trends can be compared

teacher to teacher. One should be very hesitant in utilizing short-term results. Trends are validated over years, rather than in one year.

The development of the testing instrument should be a year-long activity of the department, with every teacher involved who has students who will take the exam. The interaction among teachers emphasizes the important aspects of the curriculum; it is a way to improve teaching throughout the building.

Group, or common correcting, should also be considered as a part of departmentalized testing, and this should be known from the start. Once again, people do best those things which are checked by others. The guarantee that standards are the same throughout the department makes evaluation of staff easier and fairer.

A way of providing school comparative data is to require all accelerated classes to take either the appropriate College Board Achievement Tests or the Advanced Placement Tests. Parents and students should be notified that this is occurring prior to the registration for these courses. School board approval probably will be necessary and is a good idea even if it isn't. Consideration must be given to the financing of those students who truly cannot afford the tests, but belong in the classes.

### Conclusion

All of this will be a waste of time and will never be given more than lip service by the faculty if principals do not set high standards for themselves and their offices. Pride in superior accomplishments of all tasks is of utmost importance. School publications that look professional without misspellings or grammatical errors let others know that the school cares. School pride is contagious, but it cannot exist if the chief administrator is not a potent model. People are proud of things they do well; and high standards contribute greatly to that pride.

Does all of this sound like much work for the administrator? It is; there is no getting around it. Being a successful administrator and setting the example takes a great deal of time and effort. It is worth it.

# Cooperative Curriculum Planning with Youth Organizations

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School age youth are involved in a variety of activities that may contribute to attainment of instructional objectives of their school. As suggested by Gremin (1976), the educational value of these nonschool activities has not been recognized.

We have traditionally thought of only the school as having a curriculum, but many other institutions have quite explicit and well defined curricula. Every family has a curriculum, which it teaches deliberately and systematically via conversations around the dinner table, stories in the bedroom, pictures on the walls, and a relentless process of modeling, explanation, praise, and punishment. Every church and synagogue has a curriculum, which it teaches equally deliberately and systematically. The Old and New Testaments are among our oldest curricula, as are the Missal and the Mass, and the Book of Common Prayer. They impose meaning on existence at the same time as they seek to order the most fundamental relationships among human beings. Every employer has a curriculum, which includes not only the technical skill of typing or welding or vending or reaping, but also the social skills of carrying on those activities in concert with others on given time schedules and according to established expectations and routines. One can go on to point out that libraries have curricula, museums have curricula, Boy Scout troops have curricula, and day-care centers have curricula, and most important, perhaps, radio and television stations have curricula--and by these curricula I refer not only to programs labeled educational, but also to news broadcasts which presumably inform, to commercials which teach people to want, and to soap operas, which reinforce certain myths and values (Gremin, 1976, p. 104).

Those who plan the school curriculum must recognize the educational value of nonschool activities that students participate in. Teachers should help their students apply knowledge, skills and values acquired through nonschool

activities to the instructional program of the school and provide opportunities for the application of school learning to nonschool activities. As suggested by Sesow (1984), if this is done, individualization and personalization for all students will become a reality.

### Youth Organizations

A very popular organization among youth living in rural and/or small communities is the 4-H. In 1983 a total of 4,657,784 youth ages 9 to 19 participated in 4-H programs (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1984). Among those participating, 54.5 percent lived in communities with a population of less than 10,000 and 17 percent lived on farms. According to Frickey and Lea (1985), 4-H was started by the schools at the turn of the century to supplement the curriculum. Since 1914, over 40 million youth from this country as well as other countries have participated in 4-H. Although, originally established to extend technical training in agriculture beyond the school curriculum, 4-H currently serves youth in suburban and urban communities with programs not directly related to agriculture. Activities sponsored by 4-H are designed to lead toward the attainment of eight goals (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1984).

- Goal: To develop efficient agricultural, forest and rangeland production systems
- Goal: To enhance the processing, marketing and distribution of high-quality food and fiber products
- Goal: To support the conservation and wise use of natural and renewable resources
- Goal: To strengthen the family and home through the attainment of knowledge, human skills, and technology needed to create a satisfying quality of life within available resources
- Goal: To assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive, and contributing member of society
- Goal: To strengthen the capacity of state and local governments to deal with public issues and problems
- Goal: To cooperate with agencies and institutions of federal, state, and local governments and the private sector in developing and conducting educational programs
- Goal: To cooperate and work with national and international institutions throughout the world in using cooperative extension system's concept of education (p. 11-34)

## Cooperative Curriculum Planning with Youth Organizations

When the above goals are compared to goals and objectives of schools, it is obvious that 4-H enhances the curriculum of the school. However, if teachers and administrators do not facilitate this enhancement, students may not recognize the relationship between the instructional activities provided by the school and their 4-H activities.

4-H is only one example of organizations designed to serve youth in non-school settings. In 1984, the Boy Scouts of America served 3,567,199 male youth through their programs (B.S.A., 1984). As with the 4-H, the Boy Scouts of America strive to achieve goals that are compatible with the goals of schools.

### **The Small School Principal: Leader for Curriculum Planning**

Since small school districts do not usually have a curriculum director or assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, curriculum responsibility is often assumed by the principal. As with larger school districts, small districts often utilize a curriculum planning cycle where each content area is reviewed every five to seven years. On an annual basis, the principals within the district will take turns acting as curriculum planning leader for the different content areas to be studied and improved.

When principals assume the responsibility of district wide curriculum leader, they may fall into the trap of trying to emulate the planning processes of larger school districts. Professional literature related to small schools suggests that small schools should capitalize upon their strengths related to their smallness and diminish their weaknesses also related to size.

Probably one of the major advantages of small schools as compared to larger schools is the close working relationship between teachers, administrators and patrons within the community. Teachers and administrators are most likely acquainted with leaders of youth organizations such as 4-H, the Boy Scouts, and the Girl Scouts. There is a good possibility that some teachers and administrators may serve as adult leaders for these youth organizations. Unlike larger school districts, there should be little difficulty in involving leaders of youth organizations in curriculum planning processes. However, the principal may need to provide leadership if this practice is to be implemented. Perhaps if youth organization leaders have a better understanding of the goals and curriculum of the school their efforts in working with youth may be a valuable asset for helping the schools attain their goals.

### **The Principal as Instructional Supervisor**

No matter how well the curriculum is described in curriculum guides, what teachers do with students in their classrooms is the real curriculum of the school. If the school is to provide learning experiences that help its students relate their nonschool learning to the instructional activities of the school, the principal must provide quality supervision and instructional leadership for his or her staff.

According to Sinclair and Ghory (1985), in their work with teachers regarding the need to relate the school curriculum with nonschool learning, they encountered four views held by some teachers that block progress toward building this connection:

**Viewpoint 1:**

Teachers see the need to limit their responsibilities rather than expand collaboration among environments for learning. The initial emphasis is placed on what teachers will and will not do, more than on what learners need. (p. 238)

**Viewpoint 2:**

Teachers think curriculum exists primarily in schools. Their major responsibility is conceived as presenting and covering required course content. (p. 238-239)

**Viewpoint 3:**

Teachers see themselves as primarily responsible for decisions about the academic (mainly cognitive) growth of children in school. Parents, physicians, politicians, and religious leaders are expected to make the major decisions about the physical, social, and emotional development of students. (p. 239)

**Viewpoint 4:**

Difficulties with school learning are seen as ultimately the child's problem. Such problems are still assumed to have their source in deficiencies in the child's world outside of school. There is no reason to alter or expand the school environment for learning since the problem is essentially in the learner. (p. 241)

Although there is little research to support this writer's feeling, he believes that these viewpoints are not as common among teachers of small schools as they might be of teachers in larger schools. If this feeling is the case, principals of small schools should have little difficulty in providing the necessary instructional leadership for teachers that will facilitate helping them

## Cooperative Curriculum Planning with Youth Organizations

relate the curriculum of the school to learning activities of youth organizations. However, if some teachers display one or more of these viewpoints, the principal must work toward changing the attitude of these individuals.

### Summary

School age youth are involved in a wide variety of activities outside the school environment. These activities may contribute to attainment of the objectives of the school curriculum. The goals of some youth organizations such as 4-H are very compatible with the educational goals of schools.

There is a need for schools to help students relate learning taking place within the school to learning in nonschool environments. As an instructional leader, the principal has a responsibility to work with leaders of youth organizations by involving them in the curriculum planning processes of the school. Also, the principal must help and encourage teachers to design instructional strategies that will help students apply learning acquired in nonschool settings to the instructional activities of the school as well as helping them apply knowledge, skills and values acquired in school to their nonschool activities.

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# Career Ladders in Education

by MR. R. HOWARD WOODEN, Teaching Principal  
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The last busses have left. Only the teachers and a few students remain to put away for the summer the boxes, the textbooks, and all the other items that make up a classroom and a school. As I go through my file cabinet, I come across bits and pieces of information placed there with good intentions but never dealt with. However, these papers are one dimensional and can never recapture all the qualities of those events.

The process is especially tiring for me. As 6th grade teacher and principal, I need time for reflection and review. Apart from standardized test scores, a teacher never knows if lessons have been learned. Decisions are made every day which can affect a student forever. It is tiring because this was my first year as principal and only my second as a teacher. It is still hard for me to believe that a person with only one year of teaching heads a school staffed with teachers having seven to thirty years of experience.

I do not intend these reflections to solve any great philosophical mysteries, nor am I capable of adding to the wealth of educational wisdom. It is my hope that by reconstructing the pattern of my professional career, I will be examining the traditional educational career and the many non-traditional alternatives within.

The following is a scenario often dreamed by those entering college with the intention of becoming a "teacher":

- Graduate from college in 4-5 years with a bachelors degree and a teaching certificate (elementary or secondary--some will opt for special education or pre-school certificates)
- Secure a permanent teaching position and supplement low teaching salary by coaching or sponsoring a club
- Find a summer job
- Marry another teacher or
- Marry another professional non-teacher or
- Go to graduate school to increase pay or secure a teaching position



This list can go on and on. But rarely does it stray from the core of this "traditional dream".

My last semester in school was filled with student teaching and going to various job seeking seminars in preparation for the big job hunt. The words of those seminars and the advice given by professionals still ring in my ears. In retrospect, much of it was true, but I was either too naive or too bull-headed to listen. It simply did not fit into "my dream plan". In addition I may not have been ready for it.

After several months of interviews, countless letters, the writing and printing and rewriting and reprinting of my resume, and the research into the areas of the country where teacher demand was biggest, I had not landed a job. I felt confident that a permanent job for the coming school year was not to be and prepared myself to substitute teach.

It was at this time I decided to move to Vermont. There was, in fact, little reason professionally. Vermont was listed as possibly the worst place in the country to look for a teaching job. It was definitely at the bottom nationally for teachers' salaries.

Why did we go? The reasons were more personal than economic. My parents had lived in Vermont for ten years; we had visited them often and truly liked the area. We felt that if I was going to substitute teach the coming school year, my family and I would be more comfortable living with my parents. Also, their support could get us through some rough financial times until a permanent job was secured. So, on August 1, we set off to Vermont, the land of teaching impossibilities.

Within a week, a half dozen potential jobs were advertised in the newspaper and I quickly sent off resume packages. A couple of formal interviews resulted, but no job. Things began to change the day I saw the following announcement in the local newspaper:

"There will be a meeting of all students interested in participating in the high school football program tomorrow night at the High School at 7:00 p.m."

I remember quite clearly reading this and thinking "I've time on my hands," (school and substituting would not start for several more weeks). Perhaps this was a way of meeting some local educators (with possible connections) and potential social friends.

I missed the meeting scheduled, but showed up the next morning and introduced myself. Within hours I had new friends in education and a position as assistant coach of the freshman football team. Most importantly, the beginnings of a network of educators began working for my interests (and theirs).

My foot was in the education door. As anyone facing the first entry position in any field will attest, this is the most difficult step. I got my job by creating a network of "connections" that was able to give me greater

assistance and provide better information which made the interview process much easier.

I acquired my first permanent teaching position. It was not perfect. I wanted an elementary position, but would have 7th and 8th grade. Instead of a self-contained classroom, I would teach math and science exclusively. The school is located in a small town with a lower pay scale than larger districts nearby.

None of this meant that I was chained to this position or this school or this district forever. On the contrary, it was only the first step. The potential for any job must be explored.

My first priority was to prove my teaching ability. I had one weekend to organize and prepare to teach 7/8 grade math and science. Needless to say, it was a long weekend. It was extremely fortunate that I had been so active as a substitute teacher. The numerous substitute assignments in a variety of schools had given me an intense course in teaching methods (good and bad). I was able to draw upon those experiences during this weekend and came up with a game plan.

I'm still not sure how, but within two weeks I transformed a class of discipline problems into a hard working, well behaved and extremely likable group of students. I believe it was a combination of my sincere desire to succeed as a teacher and student weariness of "get the teacher" games they had been playing.

It did not take long to realize that I had struck gold. I quickly learned of my predecessors' mistakes and was able to correct them, thus reversing the students' behavior. The previous teacher had made so many typical teaching mistakes and failed so miserably, that by merely making it through the school year without quitting, I looked like a master teacher. Following in the footsteps of a failure is much easier than following a success.

Needless to say, the principal was quite pleased. I had solved a serious problem and the superintendent of the school district took close notice. I was given great support and public praise for a job well done.

I wanted more responsibilities and was quickly offered a chance to coordinate a series of computer awareness workshops for parents, students and teachers. Five new computers that had been purchased for the school and no one knew what to do with them.

I didn't either, but quickly bought a few books, took a computer home, and taught myself the basics. I also called a friend in the computer software business who helped me.

As the school's "computer expert" I set up a series of evening workshops. In retrospect, the workshops could have been better. But, they weren't bad and did act as a catalyst for many. There was, also, a nice fee on top of my salary.

As the science teacher for the school, I reviewed the science curriculum and found it to be out of date. I researched new textbooks and materials and,

through the cooperation of the superintendent's office, wrote a new science curriculum.

I worked with the district high school on junior/senior high transition. A new transition program was created and successfully implemented.

I chaperoned dances and refereed basketball games. I said no to nothing. But, there was a purpose. Because the school was small and located in a small community, I received greater notice and was given more opportunities for greater responsibilities than if I were employed by a much larger school where job responsibilities are more defined and limited. The opportunity for proving one's potential in a variety of situations is greater in the small school environment (become a big fish in a small pond).

To say that it was an exciting year is an understatement. I knew that I had done a good job and found out that I was capable of doing more. The question was--would my present position continue to provide new challenges and responsibilities (and the pay increases that come with them)?

It was at this time that I took a good look at what jobs were available at the present and the near future within my school and school district. The picture looked bleak. No positions in administration were readily available. Although I was well respected by the administration, they too could not come up with any immediate ideas.

Knowing that I could continue at my present position for an indefinite time period was in one way slightly frustrating. I did not want more work, but rather, to work on different levels. On the other hand, it was very secure. The old pressure for a job was not there. I was willing to travel or possibly move my family for a better position, so I could be selective. If no job appeared, I still had a job which I did like to fall back on.

After carefully watching for any new job postings, I found that there was a position that appeared suitable for a proven teacher who desired more responsibility and a higher salary. The position was "teaching principal." In Vermont, there are many smaller schools which, by Vermont state law, require a teaching principal (from one room schools to schools with a staff of 10 or less). Further research showed that there was no need for a masters degree. I had none.

Choosing to become a teaching principal was the easy part. I had to make sure that I could get a position. I was not a strong candidate on paper; in fact, I was an extremely weak candidate on paper. The weaknesses were plentiful. I had only one year's teaching experience; no administrative experience or post graduate work in administration. I was young and untried.

My strengths lay with my personal references. I had informed my principal and my superintendent of my plans and they both endorsed and even encouraged me. Most good administrators will gladly help a quality employee. They do not wish to hold them back and who knows, the favor may be returned. They both wrote strong letters of reference and offered to call if

needed. I felt confident that if a potential employer checked my references thoroughly, I would have a good chance.

I also learned that a resume package is not as effective as a good phone conversation. Good administrators can do an excellent pre-screening by asking the right questions during a ten minute phone call, as opposed to sifting through a pile of packages brought in by the secretary.

This is exactly how I became a teaching principal at a small elementary school heading a staff of teachers (including myself) at a substantially higher salary with only one year's teaching experience.

I now have a career in front of me. Future possibilities include full-time principalship, assistant superintendent, superintendent. I will look at each with the same type of process as my present position.

Perhaps administration is not for you. This "game plan" can also be applied to any aspect of education. Perhaps you see yourself as a university professor. Each state government has an extensive education department which hires a variety of professionals. I am amazed at the extensive private businesses which are geared towards education. Textbook companies and school suppliers are always looking for educators as consultants and salespeople. There are insurance companies which hire former educators as salespeople. Many universities need educators as field researchers.

There are numerous opportunities for educators, both inside and outside of education. You should not view the teaching profession as limited. Rather, look upon each position as a potential stepping stone. Do not be afraid to change direction. It is important to recognize that we do change as we grow older. A new job or position keeps us challenged and opens up new perspectives. Explore and learn what each job can offer. Use your experience to move ahead.

# Moving Towards a Vision

by DR. DENNIS LITTKY, Principal  
Thayer High School  
Winchester, New Hampshire

The school was not in good shape. The town was having economic town problems and its high school was in crisis. Everywhere the talk was about conditions at the high school.

It was now my turn to try to help pull things back together. Knowing that no one person could do it, I set out by having "coffees" at people's houses. I wanted to make the task ours rather than mine. Teachers and I met to get to know each other and for me to learn about their strengths. We needed to form a community to do our job, to make the whole greater than the parts.

I then met with each student individually to understand who they were and what we could provide for them. We could not start without beginning to understand the parts.

At that point, I made the public statement that Thayer would be the best junior-senior high school in New Hampshire. It would never have the most kids going to college or the highest S.A.T.'s, but it would be the most appropriate school around. Appropriate meant that we would provide an education meeting the needs of the rural Winchester students.

The first thing I learned is that high school is important for non-college bound students because it is their last connection with formal education. It is our last chance to help a student be a self-learner for life. If a student is not going to college then we must look at the high school curriculum in a different manner. The curriculum must prove itself to be useful for life, not what we think colleges want.

We want to prepare students to achieve, to produce, to reason, to be happy, to be responsible, to communicate. We want to develop the desire for continuous learning in all of our students. If they seek a job, we want them to be as well prepared or better qualified than other applicants. We want to challenge the academically gifted. We want to educate children in the most appropriate way so that they can become the best they can be. We want all of our students to choose a place in life, not be forced into one because they lack the skills.

Effective schools are characterized by strong educational leaders, a climate conducive to learning and worthy of a high degree of community support.

The major question for us became: what does a school look like that will give the rural student a chance in the world?

First, there must be a good climate in the school. Simply speaking, there must be an atmosphere conducive to learning. There must be trust and respect among students and among teachers, students and principal. Every research study discusses the neat, organized, but informal atmosphere that is conducive to learning. There is no simple answer on how to achieve this, but real respect for the student is critical to the development. Students know when this happens. There must be rules, but they should be simple, clear and few. They should all be based on respect; students and teachers should work on them together. People care about things they help develop.

This took awhile for all of us to believe. A key is the principal, as a person who the students feel really cares. The principal must listen and look at discipline problems as not just the students' problem, but also a problem of the environment. Why is the student getting in trouble?

My first year, a student said to me that, "The teachers are nicer since you came to the school." I interpret this to mean that all the staff knew that a goal of the school was to listen and respect students and act accordingly. We began to honor the good in the school, with assemblies, dinners and awards to those who did well in all areas. New programs were developed to provide alternative ways to learn the basic and life skills.

The community must have a good image of the school and support for this begins at home. Coffees, a newsletter, science fairs, dinners, honor role celebrations, individual conferences, positive letters home are all practices that helped parents understand and value the school.

It became clear that we must do more than present the same old content in new, flashy ways. We must concentrate on helping the students use their minds well. We must not try to cover a hundred topics barely, but to decide what is important and help the student learn it well. Information is changing at incredible rates. Our access to information is also becoming much greater through the use of technology. We must teach our students the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics as well as how to find information, the processes of decision making, organization and planning, problem solving, evaluating and ways to keep both physical and emotional well being.

Most everyone will agree with these goals, and the best of teachers get at these goals in their class. In a sense, this is nothing new. What is new is that we can't expect these things to happen while teaching students to memorize the presidents of the United States, but rather lessons and teaching styles are needed to maximize the chance that these skills will be acquired. This means ensuring that the curriculum is one in which students learn to use their minds to solve problems and changes the teachers' role from telling to helping and asking good questions.



In classes throughout the school, students are being encouraged to solve problems. A social studies class may try to govern themselves; a science class might build a greenhouse and work with the insulation, heating and growing problems; a junior high class may develop a game to see who can teach topography best to the elementary school; a debate, a Christmas card business, a study of an old graveyard. These are all examples of situations where students are asked to use their minds, to research, to restate problems, to test hypotheses. Critics ask, what about facts, about knowledge? The beauty of solving problems is that students not only acquire the process of how to learn, but they end up learning facts and concepts and master general knowledge in order to solve problems. It is more important that students remember what they learned because they have put the information to use. Students may work for hours at the registrar of records, researching the history of an area. They are interested because they have been working on a plot of land digging and trying to put together the artifacts found. The records are just another piece of information. Anything that is important enough to learn can be presented in the form of a problem.

We return to the question of what should be taught. The climate is conducive to learning, and teachers are ready to change their style. The teachers at Thayer spent a year developing what they felt are the basics that a student should acquire before entering high school (the basic skills necessary to do higher level thinking). The teachers described the exit level skills necessary to graduate. With the skills and knowledge identified, family, student and school can work together to master them. When students learn skills, they move on, making the whole school situation clearer. The school can then act as a helper, since the skills that need to be learned have already been identified.

The question now is how to evaluate. Paper and pencil tests work sometimes. We are in the process of sharing what each teacher means when they say a child can work independently or a student can evaluate their own work or uses informational resources. We as a school must be behavioral in our evaluation and then set standards.

The development of the same skills for all gives our alternative programs more credence. When a student is working at the bank, hospital or garage through our apprentice program, we are simply providing a different setting to help the student learn the skills previously identified.

What will it look like when the school has been functioning for years? Unfortunately I don't exactly know, but that is what is exciting. That is what is beautiful about turning theory into practice. That is what is invigorating about solving a problem.

At present, teachers are teaming together which allows for longer time periods, more flexibility (a teacher can work with a few students one day while the other teacher has the rest of the class), less fragmentation of subject matter

and more talk and feedback by colleagues. Teachers must use their minds well if they expect students to do the same. Teachers have a planning period together and students see the brainstorming. Students actively working individually, in small groups and as a class begin to know what teachers are looking for, to the point of asking, "Is this oral communication or a leadership skill?" The teacher moves around the room helping students go deeper into the next step.

Such activities promise a rich future. Where we are today has not come easily. It has taken four years of constant talk and struggle. The next four years will be the same. The struggle, the change, the learning, keep the school alive. They allow the students the chance to try, to fail and to try again.

School is a living, changing organism and its process of looking at itself must be a model for each classroom, a series of looks at life through which students can prepare for a full future.



# The Older Staff and Renewal

by MRS. EDNA KAPLOWITZ, Director  
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The children are out of school; they are either married or on their own, and suddenly there seems to be time and money to think about one's own needs and desires. The older teacher and spouse can plan trips, relocation for eventual retirement, and enjoyment of the release from child rearing. Older teachers have moved up on the salary scale and can find self-fulfillment in pleasurable activities. This description presents a happy picture. However there is also the older teacher whose children are still in college. They must contend with the rising costs of schooling, food, clothing and insurance rates. Perhaps, they have older children who have had to return home for various reasons: inability to make it on their own, divorce. There may be grandparents living and, because of illness or inability to care for themselves, now have become their responsibility. These older teachers may be pressured from all directions. Hopefully, they have enough seniority in the school system and will not be the next ones excessed. The Building Administrator could have a staff of people who have been teaching for at least fifteen years and the majority twenty years and more. Their ages range from forty-three to fifty-six.

This new phenomenon in the schools called "the aging staff" has put additional pressures on administrators. Through declining enrollment and budget cuts, it has become necessary to excess teachers. The seniority policy has left many schools with staff members who have been teaching for more than fifteen years. Forty, of course, is not old, but when a person reaches fifty or older, there are definite changes that take place in that person's life which can affect daily existence. The administrators now have another concern along with pressures for increasing student achievement: the older staffs in the schools. Some are excellent teachers, growing with the job, displaying enthusiasm and dedication. Others are mediocre, perhaps have not changed their teaching techniques in years, but are nevertheless dedicated. A caring building administrator who has also been around for a few years is familiar with the personal lives of faculty, sharing their good times and bad.

With pressures for accountability from the community and central office, the principal must motivate the staff to try new methods, implement new

curriculum, introduce new learning areas, work with the gifted, help the learning disabled, consider the family problems of the children, and keep up with the usual duties. The principal must be understanding of the varied personalities and the needs of staff, and create a climate in school that will help the teachers to function and generate an atmosphere in the classroom conducive to student learning. And since the principal can be assured that the present staff will be around for awhile, professional renewal must be considered. An older teacher may fear change because of unfamiliarity. The principal must be very sensitive to school climate in order to initiate growth and maintain productive staff morale and job satisfaction.

Everyone has a particular style of functioning. Some are conservative and methodical while others are emotional and critical; and others fit a whole range of descriptions such as patient and deliberate, realistic and analytical, or exuberant and idealistic. Mid-life crisis may occur if individuals have not recognized their dominant styles and have not had opportunity to develop abilities, or attempted to be what they are not. In their early forties a man or a woman will say, "What is this all about?" or "Where am I going?" There is a sudden need to satisfy desires, to make decisions. This is the time many teachers decide to return to graduate school and pursue other goals. This may be especially true for the female teacher who, although she may have been working all along, has also been raising a family and running a household. Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that this phenomenon of older teachers suddenly deciding to extend themselves are seeking the highest level of self-actualization. The assumption is that these teachers are responsible and will express initiative if recognized and respected for their efforts. McGregor's Theory Y (Sergiovanni, 1975) assumes that people are willing to work hard, accept responsibilities and accomplish worthwhile objectives, permitted self-direction.

How does this relate to the older teacher? Older persons, perhaps because of their years of experience are willing to share expertise and skills (Brown, 1981). Administrators must approach the staff and seek assistance from this valuable resource. Potent motivators are recognition and achievement. In order to make a job satisfying and to motivate the staff for greater productivity, it is necessary to recognize achievement, and encourage participation in job-related responsibilities. Older persons are more capable at this time of life to make decisions. There is foundation in the axiom of becoming wiser with age. Older persons display initiative and determination; for some it is necessary. There is a need to expand on areas of one's life in which personal decision determines the outcome of efforts. Problems arise when people are coerced into being dependent on jobs, and the inevitable frustration leads to tension and stress. As people get older, certain pronounced aspects of personality and style become accentuated. A person who was always prompt may drive others crazy with the need for being exact. Another may be

constantly losing or forgetting things. It is necessary for the principal to understand the changes in the staff and work with them.

Older teachers may suffer from physical disorders. Ill health will create unhappiness at work. Older teachers may find any increase in workload stressful. Some may be biding their time until retirement. Some may find self-actualization in other activities outside of school or in their home life. They may prefer and be satisfied with a less-pressured work life. They have no need to strive for power or higher positions (Strauss, 1969). However, this attitude can cause work to become routine and dull. Building administrators must take this valuable resource, the aging staff, and motivate it toward increased productivity to benefit itself as well as the students.

Principals must be people-oriented and sensitive to differences in personality, interests, talents and tastes. In order to determine this, they must encourage open communication with staff. They must be visible, walk the halls, visit classrooms, and talk informally or formally with staff members. Becoming aware of the pressures and problems with which teachers must cope such as needless interruptions, lack of instructional equipment and supplies, too much clerical work or confusion about innovative practices, and remedying them, can be the beginning of the renewal process (Heller, 1975). Teachers educated in the 1960's or earlier need information about new directions in all subject matter areas in order to be able to teach, cope, and advise the student of the 1980's (Byrne, 1983). The administrators must provide intelligent leadership for the staff. By eliminating the unnecessary stress of the staff's daily routines (computers can keep attendance, aides can do lunchroom duty), the principals can now plan with insight and consideration. They can give more than one day's notice for a meeting or an assignment; assist teachers with new ideas of classroom management and clerical chores; give positive feedback and less criticism on accomplishments; encourage staff to express ideas and involve them in decisions that are relevant to them; create support systems to alleviate loneliness and help teachers to share concerns and problems; encourage cooperative working relationships with other teachers (team building), rather than working in isolation; encourage health (diet, exercise, encourage teachers to participate in other activities outside of school in order not to become a workaholic). The administrators should be role models. They should plan workshops on how to handle stress, help staff to discriminate between productive and non-productive worry, and help teachers to feel good about themselves.

Administrators modeling appropriate attitude of health and enthusiasm and having identified stressful situations can now encourage change. Constructive criticism from a trusted administrator is easier to accept (Frey and Young, 1983). Mutual trust and respect are the keys. Successes and problems can be worked out as a team. The staff can trust the principal to be fair, helpful, cause no embarrassment and work out problems together, e.g., sharing a

## THE RURAL AND SMALL SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP

parental complaint. (Murray & Roehr, 1983). The principals must trust the expertise of the staff. They will discover it is the basic ingredient in productivity and success. (Laingenfilter, 1983). Teachers should have more opportunity to express ideas, be involved, try out ideas and develop professional skills. The older teachers are self-directed; they want to make their own decisions. Appropriate staff development can facilitate this desire. A conducive school climate is required to bring about change. The administrator's leadership abilities allow him/her to assess improvement needs (being receptive to ideas of individuals), set goals for improvement (sharing in planning with teachers, parents, students), and implement means for improvement (creating non-threatening atmosphere for staff development), and evaluate progress (providing feedback and recognition). Informing teachers, students and community of results through newsletters, formal meetings, assemblies, local newspapers, and informal conversations can be most rewarding. A school climate that is conducive to change is one where the administrators are supportive, encouraging and set high standards of achievement for staff as well as students (Sergiovanni & Elliott, 1975).

Initiating change requires cooperative participation in inservice training resulting in a positive attitude and success. The administrators should be keeping teachers aware of up-to-date and innovative programs, and providing current professional journals. Renewed interest leads to suggestions for change. Plans can now be made for enriching projects of interest. Change is necessary in everyone's life. If positively and cooperatively pursued, change can be uplifting, motivating and rewarding with resultant continuing morale and job satisfaction. The projects must be on-going, however, not one-shot inservice days soon to be forgotten. There must be foreseeable goals. Once needs are assessed and the goal is determined, committees can work out implementation. Principals should utilize staff expertise, ask for volunteers, and approach the quiet teachers and ask if they would not like to help. Frequently teachers may feel inadequate but would love to help (Solomon, 1983). There has to be time for the committee to work. The administration must be supportive of these renewal projects and allow time during the school day. Time to make visitations and attend workshops and conferences is important to staff renewal and high morale.

Recognizing and utilizing this valuable resource, the older teacher, administrators can promote a more productive learning institution. Staff renewal will result in curriculum renewal. An enriched curriculum will coincide with an enriched staff. A positive outlook by the staff results in positive feelings by the students. Mature teachers have a great deal to offer their students. They display more patience with students and exhibit more wisdom when handling situations (Fairman & Clark, 1983). Having had numerous experiences with their own family, the mature teachers can help students laugh at themselves. The experienced teachers have much more to

offer. It is necessary, however, for the system to recognize this valuable source and treat it accordingly. The older teachers are very willing, but require understanding. The older teachers need a few comforts, a few breaks; but actually, the older teachers have a great deal of stamina and can deal with problems and excel in their own expectations providing they receive recognition for their efforts and are permitted self-direction.

Given the opportunity to improve professionally and permitted autonomy in deciding the nature of this improvement, the older teachers will display a tremendous sense of responsibility and dedication toward their jobs. Sharing expertise and skills, transmitting knowledge, the older teachers will sense self-actualization and fellowship, benefitting the entire learning institution (Brown, 1981).

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# The Future of Rural and Small Schools

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Public education in the United States has changed very little over the past twenty years. Even the Nation At Risk and the several reports that followed have not had a dramatic effect on the public schools. Many states have initiated plans designed to improve education; however, few of these have filtered down to the individual classrooms. Therefore, there has been little change seen in the teaching methods utilized by the public school teachers.

Contrary to the past twenty years, education is destined for extensive change throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. The public schools will become increasingly accountable for their product. Schools will be called on to provide a higher quality educational program designed to prepare students for a rapidly changing technical society.

The economic challenge of providing a high quality educational program will place great demands on public education as a whole. The effects of these demands will have a far greater impact on the small rural school than on the larger school districts in the nation.

## Catalyst for Change

**Accountability** - The public schools will become increasingly accountable to both parents and the business community. As a result, parents and representatives from the business community will become more involved in educational planning and evaluation. This involvement will require that schools develop methods for measuring their effectiveness in reaching the goals established in the planning process. Through this process, public schools will be required to prove that they can compete with the private institutions already beginning to crop up around the nation.

**Resources** - The competition for the tax dollar will continue to escalate causing public schools to not only expand their lobbying efforts, but to also seek other sources of revenue and other support. Schools will likely be



required to actively compete with colleges and universities for private donations through school foundations set up for that purpose. School-business partnerships designed to benefit both the school and the business will also become increasingly more important.

**Research** - The effects of research on how children learn are already beginning to affect the teaching methods being utilized in some classrooms. Research will become more important as educators attempt to improve the effectiveness of education. In the future, education will be tailored to complement the learning styles of individual children.

**Change in business and industry** - Business and industry have changed dramatically in the past twenty years and have become much more technical; they rely, to a much greater degree, on computers and robotics. The nation is evolving from an industrial nation to one dependent upon service related businesses. Therefore, businesses require workers with a more technical nature than in the past. Schools are being called upon to alter their programs to better prepare students to succeed in an informational society.

**Changing Age Patterns** - The median age of the United States population has increased over the past several years and will continue to rise in the future. This will have an effect on the public schools in that the number of school children ages five to seventeen will continue to decrease. The echo from the baby boom of the 70's will be temporary and cause only a slight fluctuation in enrollments as these children move through the school system. As a result of the aging population of the United States, there will be fewer adults who have children in school. This will increase the reluctance of taxpayers to support educational programs for school age children. To continue to gather the support from these people, it will be necessary for schools to provide programs to assist in the training and retraining of adults.

### Changes

**Technology** - The increased demand for accountability and the competition from the private sector will require schools to more fully utilize technology to increase their effectiveness. The computer will become an integral part of every classroom and its use will be broadened from drill and practice to becoming a tool to improve thinking skills by allowing students to apply concepts introduced in the classroom. Computers will be interactive with video discs, as well as other forms of media, to provide students with both audio and video stimuli. The increase in home computers may make it possible that some students could complete many of their work sessions at home and thus eliminate the requirement for them to spend as much time in school as they do today. Advancement in telecommunications systems will make it quite common for students to have direct access to national databases



and informational sources. Direct communication with other students in all parts of the world will also be quite feasible. Students may also have the option of taking a variety of courses offered in other communities through the use of two-way audio-video communication systems.

**Teachers** - The shortage of quality teachers will continue to be more evident over the next few years as the present salary and benefit packages will not attract the top students to the education field. To overcome this deficiency, changes in preparation programs, staffing patterns and salary packages will occur.

Colleges will become more selective in the students that will be allowed to enter teacher education programs, thus enhancing the quality of individuals entering the teaching profession. The teacher preparation programs will become much more intensive, focusing heavily on learning patterns and teaching strategies. This preparation will likely include at least five years of formal college education. Teacher candidates will be given more opportunity for hands-on experiences throughout their preparation program and will likely be required to serve an apprenticeship before qualifying for certification.

To enable schools to meet more efficiently the needs of students, staffing patterns will need to be altered. The staffing of schools in the future may closely resemble that of the medical profession, in that the instructional process will be carried out by instructional teams rather than individual teachers. The instructional team may consist of a master teacher, one or more probationary teachers, teacher apprentices, teacher aides and other resource people. The master teacher will be the team leader and may be required to fulfill an extended contract calling for ten or eleven months of service.

Despite current reluctance, the index salary schedule will come to pass and teachers will be paid on the basis of their responsibility, their teaching skills and student outcomes. The salary level of master teachers will be greatly increased because of their additional responsibilities and extended contracts. Teacher salaries will become competitive with other occupations requiring similar preparation and will therefore attract higher quality individuals into the teaching profession.

**Students** - The ages of students attending the public schools will be greatly extended, causing schools to become much more diverse. Schools will become responsible for providing preschool programs for children from three to five years of age. They may also be required to provide programs for young people to age twenty-one. The public schools will also be required to provide training and retraining programs for adults. Many, if not all, schools will be called upon to provide day care services for families in which both the husband and wife are employed full time.

Individual Educational Plans will be developed and followed for each child, capitalizing on each individual's learning styles and capabilities. Students will

be encouraged to progress at their capacity, thus providing flexibility in the time allowed for students to complete their public school education.

**Curriculum** - The instructional program offered in the public schools will provide even more emphasis on the basic subjects of language arts, math and science. In addition, schools will place more emphasis on foreign language as well as preparation for the world of work. Technology will be changing so rapidly that schools will be hard pressed to keep their curriculum current. Perhaps the greatest curricular change will be in the way curriculum guides are written. Course guides will be written in terms of student outcomes to facilitate the assessment of student achievement. The continued public pressure for improving student achievement in all the curricular areas will require additional instructional time and will likely result in the extension of the school year.

**Administration** - Efficient operation of the public schools in the future will provide a continual challenge for school administrators. Rapid changes in technology will make it difficult for administrators to keep current on recent developments. It will become increasingly important for administrators to continually take advantage of inservice opportunities.

Administrators will be required to spend more time in instructional leadership responsibilities. Greater emphasis will be placed on staff evaluation and curriculum development. To allow administrators additional time for instructional leadership activities, many of the routine details will be done by computer.

School administrators will be required to provide evidence validating the effectiveness of the instructional program. To assist in this, administrators will have at their disposal, various databases designed to record and report students' performance on criterion reference tests, student interest, learning styles, and other pertinent information.

### The Small School

As the nation's work force becomes more technical it will be difficult for small schools to provide educational programs of the quality offered in larger schools. Small schools do not have the flexibility in developing staffing patterns that would maximize the efficiency of the instructional staff. Larger school systems have an advantage because they are able to disperse capital expenditures for technical equipment over many more students, making these purchases more economically feasible. Because of salary and equipment demands, small school budgets will be strained to provide equal education opportunities for their students.

Small rural schools are going to be greatly affected by the changes taking place in agriculture. With the great surpluses being produced by the American

farmer, the increased competition by other countries in the world, and the change in eating habits of the United States citizens, agriculture is due for a major transfiguration. This change will likely escalate the erosion of the family farm and the migration to more populated areas in the nation. This population shift and a continued decline of enrollment in the rural areas will make it increasingly more difficult for the small school to compete with the larger school systems in urban areas. As a result, many small schools will be forced to consider closing or consolidating with other districts.

Small schools remaining open will be required to maximize their effectiveness. To accomplish this, schools will be required to enter into cooperative agreements with other districts to share staff, equipment, and possibly facilities. It may also be necessary to actively seek additional sources of funding.

In conclusion, education as a whole will see many changes throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. These changes will be more profound in the small schools than in larger schools because of the added pressure to compete for resources and quality. These pressures will require small school administrators to be very responsive to change if they, and their schools, are to survive in this rapidly changing climate.

## Afterword

Our selection of manuscripts for *The Rural and Small School Principalship* was based, in part, on the degree to which each article illustrated the building principal at work--conducting school improvement activities and managing environments for teaching and learning. Principals everywhere must choose what to do in spite of multiple demands, uncertainty, and an overload of information. They must also be able to get things done through a number of people over whom they may have little direct control. We trust that the articles have provided insights into the actions of building principals as managers, instructional supervisors, symbolic leaders, and visionaries. Their stories demonstrate the high energy levels, good listening and observing skills, information-processing and interpersonal abilities needed to handle the stress-producing conditions that mark the daily schedule of the building principal.

A concomitant of heading a small school often appears to be an a-theoretical bias. Because of the intensity and variety of demands on their role, rural principals often display or express impatience over theory statements and research studies: "I'm too busy for that stuff." Yet extended conversation with any effective principal in a small school reveals a range of theories about how and why they do things the way they do. Rather than a-theoretical, these principals might more accurately be described as committed to a particular set of practices and theories and not much inclined to look at or discuss new or different theories.

Researchers John H. Croghan and Dale G. Lake (1981) of the Florida Council On Educational Management synthesized a large body of research on the competencies of "high-performing" principals. Their work identified a set of competencies that "appear to differentiate between average and high-performing principals" and a set of characteristics considered to be basic requirements for all principals. A partial list of the competencies detailed in the Florida study<sup>1</sup> is provided below.

**Information gathering** - Searching for and gathering many kinds of information before arriving at an understanding of an event or problem.

**Concept formation** - Reordering gathered information, seeing relationships between patterns of information from different sources, and linking information separated over space or time.

**Conceptual flexibility** - Using multiple concepts or perspectives when solving problems or making decisions, especially considering information from different points of view in reaching a conclusion.

**Organizational ability** - Focusing on time, deadlines, and flow of activities or resources to get the job done.

**Decisiveness** - Expressing a readiness to make decisions, render judgements, take actions, and take responsibility.

**Managing interactions** - Stimulating others to work together, to understand each other, to resolve conflicts, and to reach mutual agreement.

**Proactive orientation** - Taking the responsibility for being fully "in-charge" of all that happens in a situation and initiating action to learn about the larger organization and how to achieve goals in it.

**Interpersonal search** - Demonstrating understanding of the concepts, thoughts, and ideas held by others.

**Achievement motivation** - Stating high internal work standards and expressing personal and group goals as a desire to do something better.

**Commitment to mission** - Holding a set of values about the school and adhering to them despite barriers.

**Concern of the school** via the impressions created by students and staff and managing the public information about the school.

**Sensitivity** - Demonstrating awareness of the effects of one's behaviors and decisions on other people and groups.

In retrospect, we see that each of the articles in this volume illustrate one or more of these competencies. The essays provide working definitions for those who are presently principals, those who are considering careers in educational administration, and those who educate continuously developing professionals.

We believe that this book expresses a spirit and desire on the part of rural and small school leaders to communicate ideas and practices. The publishers could not bind the intangible desires resident in authors to do well and to share their experiences with others. This book, then, represents a tangible invitation to all educators: read and do the same.

- <sup>1</sup> Croghan, John H. and Lake, Dale G. (1981). "Competencies of Effective Principals and Strategies for Implementation." Occasional Papers in Educational Policy Analysis. No. 410. Research Triangle Park, North Carolina: Southeastern Regional Council for Educational Improvement.

## CREDITS

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## The Rural and Small School Principalship: Practice, Research, and Vision

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- § Is the rural and small school principalship a unique role?
- § Are there attendant characteristics of this role needing exploration and definition?
- § What do rural and small school principals have to say to one another?
- § What aspects of the rural and small school principalship can be enlightened by action-research projects?
- § What is the future of rural and small schools?

These questions and a host of others are addressed through essays in *The Rural and Small School Principalship*. The work is testimony to the growing corps of practitioners and scholars who describe the principal at work, the principal as user and participant in research, and the principal as visionary.

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### The Rural and Small School Principalship

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